

MAN THE GENERALIZER

Is there anything going on in the world today that might help us to take heart? Is there any way of looking at the human adventure which might possibly cast another light—a friendly light—upon even the symptoms of extreme disorder and aimless confusion that we see all about?

The only ground for hope that we can see is the slow emergence and strengthening of our consciousness of the generalizing tendency in human beings. This tendency comes out in scores of ways. It is, we should like to propose, the characteristic expression of the modern spirit. It is also the characteristic expression of the *human* spirit, at its best.

Science is no doubt the most obvious and most prevalent illustration of the triumph of the generalizing tendency. Science is the principle of explanation at work in the physical world. Its object is to unite diverse phenomena within one scheme of meaning. The outstanding virtue of science is that it works. When science gathers up in a single theory of meaning an entire category of heretofore unrelated happenings, and then proves the theory by practical demonstration, its generalization stands vindicated in the eyes of all. The numerous particulars which the theory unites are now part of a majestic structure of meaning. They *fit*. An enormous psychological satisfaction results, along with the material satisfactions that come from the applications in technology of scientific generalization.

This is not the place to launch a criticism of the misapplication of scientific method, although this is something that is very much needed by modern thought. It is important to suggest, however, that central human problems are defined by the conflict between different streams of the generalizing tendency. Actually, the drive to generalization is so powerful a human endowment

that a noticeably successful, although limited, expression of the tendency to generalize, such as science, easily acquires an imperialistic temper. "I have triumphed over all obstacles," it says proudly. "Get out of my way." The common practice by the representatives of a dominant generalizing tendency is to redefine all human problems so that they will come under the control of that tendency. The misfortune, here, is that a single expression of the tendency is mistaken for the primordial reality which it represents. In time, we discover important matters which that expression of the generalization does not touch at all, and then the ardors of the search for explanation and meaning seek another stream-bed; but meanwhile we have been through an agonizing cycle of transition, involving much suffering and despair.

How can we avoid such disasters? It may not be possible to avoid the processes of which, until now, trouble and disaster have formed the climax, but it is just possible that this course of events can be somewhat tamed and controlled through rational understanding of what is being fulfilled by these means.

Where and how, exactly, do we go wrong? Take for example the scientific sort of generalizations. They are fine in the understanding and manipulation of physical materials and forces, but may be drastically misleading in relation to man himself. If you went to school twenty or thirty years ago—and the situation has not greatly changed since—you were taught that man is a biological organism needing the satisfaction of basic physical and physiological needs. A little later other needs—psychological or psychic needs—were spoken of, but the basic term *organism* is still primary in the definition of man. The project, according to this definition, is to extract from the natural environment the

elements necessary to the satisfaction of these needs and supply them to human beings.

But the project, so conceived, has been a failure. It has been a failure, we submit, because it defined man as an object rather than a subject. It defined man as essentially an organism to be "fed" in various ways.

Another dominant generalization about man was the Marxist conception which defined him as an economic unit. In Marxist thought, the primary relations of man are with the social and economic system instead of with the natural world. But again, man is an object, a creature to be "fed" according to certain rules which are said to represent social justice.

This project is also a failure. It is not a failure, perhaps, in terms of its own definitions of the good, which seem to have been realized, or are on the way to being realized, in a number of countries, but it is certainly a failure on the basis of any humanistic measure of human good. It seems obvious that what broad success in general human terms may be hoped for from the Marxist generalization will come only as the human beings who are part of this social experiment break out of the confines of the Marxist generalization and start making new generalizations of meaning for themselves.

The common error seems to be in allowing a bitter competition of one generalization with another. And this error arises because of the habit of men to assume that they are in possession of the One True Generalization.

The idea that we are the ones who have it, who Know the Truth, dies hard. The practical man will argue that, even if we don't have it, we must *pretend* to have it, since social cohesion—vulgarly, Patriotism—depends upon believing that you are right, and the other people wrong. The conviction of having the truth is the glue that holds the nation or culture together.

Perhaps so, but this sort of certainty is also the justification of the armaments race and of the

use—actual use in the past, prospective use in the future—of atomic weapons.

There is a further aspect of this question: Can men actually *tolerate* the relativism of admitting that they don't know the truth, that their generalization is only one of many and quite possibly of an inferior kind?

Put this way, we doubt if the problem has a solution. But you don't have to set the problem in these terms. This longing for absolute finality may be a kind of infection which attacks the psychological nature of man in the same way that acquisitiveness exaggerates and perverts all the natural instincts which serve physical self-preservation.

What is the origin of this infection? It is, without doubt, the religions in which men are in the habit of believing—the religions which have lost living touch with the antique mystery religions and which grossly obscure the actual human situation by advertising possession of the One True Faith.

Whatever the real truth is, it is not that obvious. We should have seen this from the simple inability of wise men to communicate their wisdom to others. Somehow or other, *we don't get it*, or we get only fragments and broken bits; and then, to the sad discredit of human intelligence, we take those bits and make stained glass windows out of them to shut out the bright clear light of day.

The pioneers of science may also have been philosophers, but the popularizers of science, who cast themselves in the role of the emancipators of mankind, only repeated the error. Instead of breaking with the only serious mistake of religion—that of claiming to have the One True Faith—they adopted it in another form. The popularizers of science announced that they would periodically publish, in continuous installments, the Only True Facts.

They thought that because they dealt in facts instead of faith, they were doing something quite

different. What they overlooked is that men don't really *use* facts in their lives, they use *meanings*, and meanings are always generalizations. The scientists had plenty of generalizations, but they were about facts, not about meanings. This meant a dead end of science in human life, but the scientists have been extremely reluctant to admit their inability to supply meanings in human terms.

A kind of half-way house of admission of ignorance of meanings was reached by the scientific philosophers known as positivists. The positivists discovered that they were indeed dealing with facts, not meanings. But since the imperialism of the scientific generalization was still strong in them, they went on to insist that because science could deliver no generalization in meaning, neither could anyone else. This, so far as we know, is about where most of the scientific philosophers stand at present, although by now, perhaps, most of them are interesting themselves in things other than the campaign for positivism. Since the epistemological issue has been so overshadowed by the nuclear weapons issue, very few people talk about it any more.

One last point, however, on the question of positivism. Occasionally one finds a scientist who, having been properly disillusioned concerning the promise of finding the Truth as the result of his professional activity, takes the Positivist position, and then goes on to come out, as it were, on the Other Side. Pierre Duhem was a positivist of some distinction who broke out of the intellectual strait-jacket of the scientific methodology. He wrote:

What is this metaphysical affirmation that the physicist will make, despite the nearly forced constraint imposed on the method he customarily uses? He will affirm that underneath the observable data, the only data accessible to his methods of study, are hidden realities whose essence cannot be grasped by these same methods, and that these realities are arranged in a certain order which physical science cannot directly contemplate. But he will note that physical theory through its successive advances tends to arrange experimental laws in an order more and more analogous to the transcendent order according

to which the realities are classified, that as a result physical theory advances gradually toward its limited form, namely that of a *natural classification*, and finally that logical unity is a characteristic without which physical theory cannot claim this rank of natural classification.

In other words, the labors of the physicist in applying his generalizations to the raw materials of science eventually generate a sense of another kind of generalization, inaccessible to his own method, yet manifest in the way that the truths reached by poetic inspiration are manifest—by means of an intrinsic harmony of truth, although a truth that can never be "nailed down." And it is this inward sort of truth, forever present, yet forever unpossessed, that becomes the soul of the discipline the scientist pursues.

Here is an idea of truth recalling the visage of Eros, which Psyche can never see; or the single white feather dropped from on high, which Olive Schreiner's dying hunter felt fall upon his breast, after the long and fatal climb to find the legendary white eagle no man had ever seen save as a distant speck against the sky.

All the talk of "myth," these days, is evidence of the growing awareness of the generalizing tendency in human beings. It gives promise of one day becoming the only final generalization we can tolerate and that can survive all criticism—the generalization which says that man is essentially a generalizing being.

How many types of big generalizations—myths—are there? Dozens, no doubt, but for our purpose we shall speak of three: Absolute Myths, which are doomed to break up and be forgotten; Relativist Myths, which are critical in function, being a reaction to the failure of the Absolute Myths, and have therefore only a transitory life, since they cannot nourish the human longing for affirmation; and, finally, the Absolute-Relativist Myth, which is concerned with the fact of the myth-making faculty and its meaning.

The break-up of the Christian Myth was accomplished during the Reformation and the

Renaissance. This long and painful transition brought to birth dozens of other Christian-type absolute myths which were a little less absolute— weaker, that is, or compromised by the relativist implications of individual conscience as a spiritual authority. The Renaissance also brought awareness of the rich diversity of Nature, beginning a long cycle of particularist exploration of the "real" world. Then, with the growing up of science, came the view that the "real" world is the mathematically generalized world, and since the generalization of science dealt with matter and its motions—Galileo's primary characteristics—so reality was soon defined in terms of matter and its motions, leading to the formal doctrines of Materialism. Man—conscious, generalizing man, that is—could not even get into the scientific universe and be recognized as real, much less take part in its activities.

Meanwhile, the generalizing tendency kept invading the territory of the old Absolute Myth and reducing the elements of experience to manageable proportions. Darwin, Freud, and Marx are said to be the three great annihilators of the old universe of values, and so they are. Their weapons were new generalizations. Darwin attacked the Myth of Creation with the principle of Evolution; Freud attacked the Myth of Morality with the Id and Libido; Marx attacked the Myth of Property with the Communist Manifesto. Each drew up new systems of reality which gave fresh meaning to regions of life sorely neglected by the old Absolute Myth, but these systems lacked a self-regenerating principle because the concept, the definition, of man in these systems was of a static, mechanistically operated entity—a definition which totally ignored the primary role of Man as Generalizer. As a result of these bad definitions of man, the new myths or systems of reality, while vigorous for a time, have been continually attacked without and subjected to counter-revolutions by advocates of the old Absolute Religious Myth. The modern age, we may say, intellectually and morally, as well as politically, is ravaged by numerous imperialisms,

each of which demands total allegiance; and when total allegiance is not called for, the half-hearted allegiance that is its substitute in relativist ("tolerant," agnostic and humanist) doctrines still leaves unfed the hungers of the great majority of men for an affirmative sense of meaning. Where, then, lies the encouragement of the present? It lies in the persistent tendency of the new generalizations which come along to give attention to the idea of man as essentially a generalizing intelligence. Dr. Hutchins' determined effort to root in modern culture the intellectual disciplines illustrated in the great books of Western civilization was a deliberate attempt to awaken, foster, and sustain the generalizing capacity of human beings. It was a functional recognition of the nature of the human soul. However haunted by pieces of the old myths of the past, however compromised by the bad habits and tricks of a commercial civilization, the movement was honorably inspired, intensively led, and constructive in effect. We do not know how many Americans discovered for the first time from the Great Books program that there was a man named Socrates who placed the human power to generalize about the nature of things above all lesser values, and defended the exercise of that power to his death—indeed, made his death itself into a defense of that power, as the *Crito* shows; nor do we know how many more failed because of relativist indoctrination to recognize the genius of the Athenian sage; but we would say that the level of moral perception in the United States has unquestionably been raised by this enterprise in adult education. Not many enterprises can claim as much.

Then, without much fanfare—indeed, until lately, with almost no recognition—a slow revolution has been going on in the field of psychology. The Freudian myth has been largely retailed by the neo-Freudians and made into an inquiry into the nature of man. This inquiry can do nothing but grow and spread its influence, in terms of the redefinition of man as a generalizing being—a being who declares meanings for himself

and can live on in no other way. Freud instituted a method of investigation—direct investigation of man himself, without intermediaries or external authorities. It was of course impossible that this method should be applied without the incidental manufacture of little dogmas and little absolute myths along the way. After all, the habits of a thousand years can hardly be dropped in a decade. But the method took root, the discoveries began to be made, and the myth of the new psychologists gradually became dynamic instead of "objective." Finally, as Erich Fromm declared recently, it became evident that *Man is not Thing*. The general course of this psychological revolution has been described by Ira Progoff:

The foundation of the new kind of psychology is its conception of man as an organism [!] of psychological depth and of spiritual magnitude. Its underlying aim is to carry out its psychological work on the unconscious levels of the personality in such a way as to open the dormant potentialities of the spirit and permit them to emerge and unfold. This means something considerably more basic than the analytical development of those capacities that the individual requires in order to adapt successfully in the modern competitive world. It involves much more, a penetration by psychological experience deep into the core of one's being, deep into the spiritual seed of life itself. The ultimate task of the new psychology is to re-establish man's *connection with life*, not superficially in terms of slogans or therapeutic stratagems, but fundamentally and actually as an evident fact of modern existence. Its task is to bring the modern person into touch with the sustaining and creative forces of life beyond all intellectual doctrines that may be preached or professed, to make these forces available to man, and to make man psychologically available to them in terms of experiences that he can learn to verify by himself, within himself. (*The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, 1956.)

We are not sure we understand all of this, but the significant thing about what Mr. Progoff says is that it is in terms of function, not ideological content, and any account of the human being as essentially a generalizing intelligence would have to be in abstract, functional terms, instead of in the terms of a particular generalization about the

nature of things. Perhaps there is a "substantial" way to speak of these functions; perhaps ancient mysticisms have an appropriate vocabulary which can "entify" these functions without misleading into some form of unverified assumption, but Western thought is surely not ready to adopt wholesale any such catalogue of beliefs.

In general, then, the vitality of modern thought is always found in the search for the "undermeaning" of human activities. This is an attempt to see the generalizing tendency at work. The way in which this tendency works is our best clue to the authentic behavior and life processes of human beings.

REVIEW

NOVELS ON THE LAST WAR

IN the movie version of Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, one point manages to come out clearly: nuclear warfare on a scale capable of destroying the whole human race could be precipitated by a single nervous frightened man pushing a missile-launching button in error. And this, as several novelists have realized, is the supreme horror—a greater horror, even, than the fantastically lethal effects of thermonuclear explosion, or the fact that both bombs and doses of bacteriological and chemical death continue to be stockpiled.

In *Dark December*, a novel by Alfred Coppel (Gold Medal), the aftermath of all-out H-bomb attacks finds one of the "missilemen," self-described as the "master of a million graves," discussing what has just happened with another military survivor whose nerves have gone:

"I've been afraid so long I don't think I know what courage is any more, Major," Bayles said unhappily.

"It is different things at different times, son," I said. "Most often it is doing what you know to be right and refusing to do what you know is wrong and senseless."

Bayles looked at me in perplexity. "Then what about the war, Major?"

I had no answer for that. A few moments ago I had lied to this boy. I had told him I knew what I did in the war—what we all did—was necessary. But the war itself was so brutally senseless—as senseless as putting Collingswood's revolver to your head and pulling the trigger. So to speak of "necessity" was to shun the truth, to refuse to accept the responsibility for the monstrous crime that had been committed against humanity. Each of us bore some of the weight of that responsibility, and some of the guilt. If we didn't make a start now, this moment, to face the truth, then it would all happen again and again.

"The war was wrong, Bayles" I said. "And we were all cowards for fighting it. You and me and the Russians . . . All of us, individually and collectively. We weren't cowards because we were afraid. We were cowards because we didn't have the courage to be afraid enough. We will pay for that now. I think

that is what the judgment of history will be—if there is any history after this. That's all I can tell you right now. It is the nearest thing to truth that I know."

The speaker, "Major Gavin," discovers that although the United States is now infected with lawless guerilla bands, so that simple survival seems to require armed self-defense, he has become both psychologically and physically incapable of killing another living thing. He has a gun, but he cannot fire, even though some of the missiles he launched in the war had atomized hundreds of thousands of persons in a single moment. Also, when he discovers a captured Russian airman locked in a cage so that he can be endlessly tortured, Gavin risks his life to set his former enemy free. Finally he discovers, in the person of another American major, that the roots of warfare had little to do with Russia. The war grew out of psychotic twists of the immature human mind.

Alas, Babylon by Pat Frank (Lippincott and Bantam) is another account of the months that follow nuclear devastation of the United States. In this story a retired admiral working on a history of events leading up to the final war begins to realize that if such a "history" means anything, it is, in itself, a kind of insanity. He begins to probe for other causes. Answering the question of a colleague, he explains his thinking:

"What happened to us, Admiral?"

Sam Hazzard disconnected the radio's batteries and pulled his chair around to face them. "I've been trying to find the answer." He nodded at his typewriter and the books massed on his desk. "I've been trying to put it down in black and white and pass it along. Up to now, no bottom. All I've found out was where I myself—and my fellow professionals—failed. I'll explain."

He opened a drawer and drew out a folder. "I called this 'A Footnote to History.' You see, I was in the Pentagon when we were having the big hassles on roles and missions and it occurred to me that I might be one of the few still alive who knew the inside of what went on and how the decisions were reached and I thought that future historians might be interested. So I set it all down factually. I set down

all the arguments between the big carrier admirals and the atomic seaplane admirals and the ICBM generals and pentomic division generals and heavy bomber generals and manned missile generals. I told how we finally achieved what we thought was a balanced establishment.

"When I finished I read it over and realized it was a farce."

There is no need, we think, to dwell on the horrid details recounted in these two books—the descriptions of slow death from radiation poisoning, the complete obliteration of towns and even forests in split seconds, the hundred-mile-an-hour winds caused by the fire bombs. Beyond a certain point the mind becomes anesthetized by such horrors, making it useless to go on. But there are some incipient disasters which *should* be given our full attention and a great deal of discussion. For example, in the *Nation* for April 30, John Barden reports on a conference of experts who met in Cleveland to consider means of increasing the production of chemical and bacteriological weapons. Mr. Barden writes:

This is a report on a one-day glimpse of federal activity in the fields of chemical (CW) and biological (BW) warfare and defense. Men in responsible positions cautiously raised the curtain as far as is permitted by federal security in a symposium on "Non-Military Defense—Chemical and Biological Defenses in Perspective" at the 137th national meeting of the American Chemical Society held here recently.

The twelve participants had a common purpose—to inform and arouse the American people from apathy. This reporter, though fraught with apathy, was aroused. The inescapable impression was of inmates revealing the doings in their asylum so far as the guards would permit. These doings they justified by the same doings, only better, in the east wing of the asylum located in the Soviet Union.

An explicit and pervasive premise of the symposium was the existence of the absolute enemy. The enemy, usually though not always identified as the Soviet Union, is formidably capable, implacable and inhuman. He is ready tomorrow to fall upon the United States, a pious, righteous country, to wreak his objectives of destruction and enslavement—or just blackmail—with infernal effectiveness. Fairness

requires consideration of this premise in full context, the common purpose to inform and arouse. Fairness also requires that we keep in mind the common definition of paranoia: a mental disorder characterized by systematized delusions, especially of persecution.

Typical of the inflammatory utterances quoted by Mr. Barden is the following, a summary under the heading "What We Must Remember and What We Must Do," by a former member of the American Chemical Society:

Suppose, at the time most favorable to them, Russia forces us to sign an agreement to banish nuclear warfare, thus destroying our retaliatory power. Suppose at that point Russia unmask its CW and BW potential and demands our compliance with its terms for world domination. Suppose at that time we have developed neither CW nor BW retaliatory power nor adequate CW and BW defense. If this supposition seems completely impossible to you, or if it leaves you complacent and apathetic about this country's present activity in the field of CW and BW defense, then this symposium has been a failure!

The "final war" novels, like the ones we have quoted, do not make pleasant reading, but we seem to detect in them a growing maturity in regard to the matter of "enemies." To borrow from another work of fiction on another subject, "the face of my assassin is my own."

COMMENTARY

SOMETHING GOOD HAPPENING

THERE are a few really civilized men in the world, and one of them is E. B. White, who writes for the *New Yorker*. Having recently reached his sixtieth birthday, Mr. White decided to apply his unspecialized man's intelligence to the problem of international relations. On the whole, he finds the behavior of the United States pretty discouraging. The Soviets, he thinks, know exactly where they are going, but the West displays no such clarity of purpose. We do, he thinks, exactly what Russia would like us to do. We do not seem to have any destination. Concerning the objective of "peace," Mr. White writes (in the *New Yorker* of June 18):

We use the word "peace" the way the East likes to see it used—in the last paragraph of the President's formal speeches, and preceded by the adjectives "just" and "lasting," as though peace were some sort of precious stone that, once discovered, would put an end to trouble for all time. I am beginning to tire of running the East's errands and dropping into the East's traps, and I wish I could set off on a different journey, under good auspices.

A lot of us feel that way. . . . Well, what does Mr. White mean by "peace"? He has a short answer to this question:

Most people think of peace as a state of Nothing Bad Happening, or Nothing Much Happening. Yet if peace is to overtake us and make us the gift of serenity and well-being, it will have to be the state of Something Good Happening. What is this good thing? I think it is the evolution of community, community slowly and surely invested with the robes of government by the consent of the governed.

Mr. White quotes from the speeches of a number of the presidential candidates, seeking evidence of a sense of direction. He finds instead a lack of "political inventiveness." He states his own inclinations:

I would welcome the stirrings of political union with the United Kingdom, with France, with Scandinavia, and with all the Western European nations—with any nation, in fact, that could show a long, successful record of government by the consent of the governed. For I would feel that although I was

being placed temporarily in a more dangerous position I was nevertheless occupying higher ground, where the view was better.

"Let us," Mr. White proposes, "pursue the shape of English liberty":

A federation of free states, with its national units undisturbed and its people elevated to a new and greater sovereignty, is a long way off, by anybody's guess; but if we could once settle on it among ourselves, and embrace it unashamedly, then we would begin to advance in a clear direction and enjoy the pleasures and disciplines of a political destination.

This is a line of discussion which ought to be continued, if there is ever to be that "different journey" for which Mr. White longs.

He has, however, some other things to say. For example, he doesn't think much of proposals and plans for disarmament, such as, for example, that of C. Wright Mills (reported in this week's *Frontiers*). What is wrong with the idea of disarmament? After disarmament, Mr. White explains, you have the same warlike people, but without any tools for war. He seems to think that it won't be long before they get some more guns and arms. "Disarmament talks," he says, "divert our gaze from the root of the matter, which is not the control of weapons, or weapons themselves, but the creation of machinery for the solution of the problems that give rise to the use of weapons."

There is something to this objection, of course. But the same sort of objection applies to every sort of "radical" proposal. Actually, no really effective program for the elimination of war can be carried out without far-reaching changes in human attitudes. Nor is there the slightest possibility that people who still believe that war is the last best hope of their freedom will ever disarm.

Disarmament is a kind of banner or symbol. Men often call for it when what they really want is the state of mind which will make armaments irrelevant and useless. This may be a mistake, since it permits a practical man like Mr. White to point out that disarmament may serve the political

purposes of a nation which has no intention of *remaining* disarmed.

Not all men have the keen, analyzing intelligence of Mr. White. Many men will continue to use the idea of disarmament as a symbol of their longing for peace. And this makes it all the more important for those who see Mr. White's point to clarify what *they* mean by working for peace. Meanwhile, it seems a little too bad that Mr. White's hardheaded argument against disarmament had to appear. *Time* Magazine (July 4), for example, picked up and quoted this argument—this argument and nothing more—when it was really the least important thing Mr. White had to say.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT AND THE "SOUL":

III

SOME twenty years ago a professor of logic and ethics, who now heads the Department of Philosophy in one of the world's largest universities, made an astounding admission to a senior class. In those days the professor referred to himself as a "Naturalist," which connoted a particular atmosphere of pragmatism, and on this occasion he had been involved in explaining human behavior in terms of environmental conditioning, erecting the structure of naturalist ethics in the John Dewey frame of reference. It was a fine, friendly structure, since it implied compassion rather than moral judgment in respect to others, and also suggested the need for continual improvement of one's own ethical horizons. But near the close of the course, this professor deviated from his accustomed lecture program to make, as he said, a confession of confusion. He would *like*, he said, to think that human behavior could be completely explained in the terms he had been using, but that in all honesty, he must not brush aside a nagging thought which often came to him—that every human being seemed to be *born with* something which neither heredity nor environment would adequately account for, and that among the children of a single family the contrasts which seemed to be of essential character were particularly arresting.

This leads us to a favorite "metaphysical" thesis regarding the origin of what might well be called the "soul"—the hypothesis of palingenesis or rebirth. Most arguments about immortality seem to focus on the desire of the individual to believe that his present personality is indestructible, and therefore opponents of all doctrines of immortality like to discount such beliefs on the ground of wishful thinking. It seems to us, as it did to the Greeks, that this is clearly

going at the question in the wrong way. As Plato makes plain in the *Phaedo*, the Greek thinkers, though cautious on the subject of immortality as an extension of the present life, were convinced of the pre-existence of the soul—this because, as men of natural philosophic temperament, they were trying to find a reasonable explanation for the remarkable diversities of human individuality. Further, philosophic concern with any teaching regarding a plurality of lives becomes especially interesting in the context of education, where unique differences are so greatly in need of understanding. Here we find conjunction of everything expressed in the terms of heredity, environment and the "soul," and it is here that the philosophy of pre-existence, incidentally involving further successive rebirths of the same essential individuality, becomes especially provocative. It is appropriate to quote here from C. J. Ducasse's Paul Carus lectures for 1951, published under the title of *Nature, Mind, and Death*. Dr. Ducasse, a former president of the American Philosophical Association, is in this passage considering the hypothesis of pre-existence and rebirth with an eye to the strict requirements of philosophy and logic:

In what a human being is at a given time we may distinguish two parts, one deeper and more permanent, and another more superficial and transient. The latter consists of everything he has acquired since birth: habits, skills, memories, and so on. This is his personality. The other part, which, somewhat arbitrarily for lack of a better name we may here agree to call his individuality, comprises the aptitudes and dispositions which are native in him . . . There can be no doubt that each of us, on the basis, of his same individuality—that is, of his same stock of innate latent capacities and incapacities—would have developed a more or less different empirical mind and personality if, for instance, he had been put at birth in a different family or had later been thrust by some external accident into a radically different sort of environment.

Reflection on this fact should cause one to take his present personality with a large grain of salt, viewing it no longer humorlessly as his absolute self, but rather, in imaginative perspective, as but one of the various personalities which his individuality was

equally capable of generating had it happened to enter phenomenal history through birth in a different environment. Thus, to the question: What is it that could be supposed to be reborn? an intelligible answer may be returned by saying that it might be the core of positive and negative aptitudes and tendencies which we have called man's individuality, as distinguished from his personality. And the fact might further be that, perhaps as a result of persistent striving to acquire a skill or trait he desires, but for which he now has but little gift, aptitude for it in future births would be generated and incorporated into his individuality.

When W. Macneile Dixon, in his *Human Situation*, first broaches the hypothesis of a plurality of lives, he says: "Surprising fancy, you think, but let us give it rein." It is true enough that no department of human inquiry fails to receive stimulation from such speculation. From one standpoint, it is easy to see Dixon's point when he writes: "How clear it is that death is death for men as for all living things! Well, I should myself put the matter rather differently. The present life is incredible, a future credible. 'Not to be twice-born, but once-born is wonderful.' To be alive, actually existing, to have emerged from darkness and silence, to be here today is certainly incredible." Dixon is a delighting and persuasive advocate:

We are deceived, indeed, if we fancy that our five senses exhaust the universe, or our present standpoint its many landscapes. In the soul's unvisited and sleeping parts it holds both faculties and powers not mentioned in the books of the historians, the manuals of the mathematicians or the physiologists. "The sensitive soul," as Hegel wrote, "oversteps the conditions of time and space; it beholds things remote, things long past and things to come." We are not to assume that what we do not now know will never be known. . . .

And what kind of immortality is at all conceivable? Of all doctrines of a future life palingenesis or rebirth, which carries with it the idea of pre-existence, is by far the most ancient and most widely held, "the only system to which," as said Hume, "philosophy can hearken." "The soul is eternal and migratory, say the Egyptians," reports Laertius. In its existence birth and death are events. And though this doctrine has for European thought a

strangeness, it is in fact the most natural and easily imagined, since what has been can be again. This belief, taught by Pythagoras, to which Plato and Plotinus were attached, has been held by Christian fathers as well as by many philosophers since the dawn of civilization. It "has made the tour of the world," and seems, indeed, to be in accordance with nature's own favourite way of thought, of which she so insistently reminds us, in her rhythms and recurrences, her cycles and revolving seasons. "It presents itself," wrote Schopenhauer, "as the natural conviction of man whenever he reflects at all in an unprejudiced manner."

No doubt many "reincarnationists" have occupied themselves with purely personal speculations as to who "they" might have been in a previous life—a sort of wishful thinking which has nothing to do with the problems of philosophy. Likewise, the desire to escape personal annihilation is hardly philosophical ground for belief in immortality. Yet an unprejudiced examination of the philosophy of a plurality of lives, in contrast with all other conceptions of human origin or human immortality, is most fascinating. A discussion of this topic, far from being irrelevant to matters pertaining to education, may open up avenues of reflection which have too long been closed to the modern mind.

FRONTIERS

War Is the Enemy

IN the *Nation* for June 18, C. Wright Mills takes off from the U-2 incident to discuss the prospects of war and peace between the United States and Soviet Russia. He calls this article "The Balance of Blame," but his discussion is more dispassionate than the title would imply. (This material will appear as a chapter in a revised, up-to-date version of Mills' *The Causes of World War III*, to be published soon as a Ballantine paperback.) Very nearly everything Mr. Mills says seems sound common sense. His analysis is notably free from stereotypes of opinion and his conclusions are "realistic" in the sense that they take full account of the fact that the obstacles to peace are psychological rather than military or economic.

Mr. Mills is convinced that the Soviet policy-makers believe the Russian system can triumph over Western societies without having to resort to arms. These leaders, he says, are confident that they can compete successfully with the United States "in economic, cultural and political terms," and he proposes that the U.S. should accept this challenge and shift the conflict to another arena than the military one. His program for this shift begins with graduated unilateral disarmament:

We should say: The United States is going to do this and this and this, regardless of what other states—allies or enemies—do or fail to do. Later provisions of the plan, our announcement should make clear, will be put in effect if other states respond in stated ways to our initial actions and to the plan as a whole. These later steps are subject to later negotiations to be held after the United States has begun to act out the plan.

Mills has practical arguments to meet practical objections. "No government," he says, "is going at once to destroy all of its weaponry." In the case of the United States, the stockpiles of

nuclear weapons are so large that a lot of them never would be missed:

Even in the insane terms of the military metaphysic, there is nothing to be lost by such a line of action. Destroy half the stockpiles, abandon half the bases, and still there would be ample ammunition and simple means of delivery to insure "military safety" in accordance with the weird and ghoulish ideas of safety now prevailing in the higher circles.

Americans, Mills proposes, ought to *read* the full texts of Soviet disarmament proposals. If we think these proposals are mere "bluff" or propaganda, we can prove it only by beginning to meet the initial conditions of such proposals by word and deed. The first steps of disarmament can be carried out with no significant danger. Mr. Mills continues:

I do not understand how any reasonable person who really is against war, who really is against the waste and the peril of the arms race, who really does not fear a genuine peace, can fail to respond to these concrete proposals in some such manner as I have just outlined.

If these and other proposals are *not* made by the U.S. elite, by the American people, or at least by one of the two political parties, will that not correctly be judged as one more weighty item shifting the balance of blame onto the United States of America? . . .

To put the point in this way, to urge that a Soviet proposal be taken seriously and acted upon, even in a tentative way, is to run the risk of being labeled "soft on communism" and all the rest of it. I have reason personally to know that. But must we not ask: If we take such charges seriously, allowing them to inhibit our attempt to think clearly—as they are intended to do—will it be possible to propose anything that might break us out of the military metaphysic and the paranoid trap, that might enable men to get off the road that is leading to World War III?

For Americans today, I think the answer is No, it would not be. For the charge is itself part of the stalemate, part of the inhibition maintained by cold warriors among the U.S. elite and various circles of the NATO intellectuals. From the other side, too, the reverse charge of "being soft on America," is part of the stalemate maintained by Stalinist die-hards and other cold warriors of the Soviet bloc.

That is why we should not hesitate to consider why so many Americans have lost even the vision of peace, why there is such an absence of realistic American programs for peace, why U.S. decision-makers are so inert when confronted by proposals by others. And that is why we should, each of us, begin to set forth and debate, in the most partisan manner open to us, guide lines to peace.

In doing this, should we not remember that the only realistic military view is the view that war, and not Russia, is now the enemy? Should we not keep in mind that the only realistic political view is the view that the cold warrior on either side, not just the Russian, is the enemy?

The heart of Mr. Mills' argument is the following:

Like the American, the Soviets' elite persist in the delusion that nuclear war is still a means to ends other than the suicide of mankind. Is there any doubt that they will resort to nuclear violence if they feel they need to in order to "defend" their system and make possible the fulfillment of their many domestic plans and aims?

If the fateful interaction of the "war parties" on either side continues, and their ascendancy within each bloc goes on, then it will not matter much where the over-all, historical balance of blame lies at any given phase of the interplay towards mutual annihilation. To break the deadlock, to break out of the spiral of causes, unilateral action is now necessary.

This is the meaning of Margaret Mead's statement: "We have become, in grim reality, our enemies' keepers, as well as our brothers' keepers." It is also the meaning of Brock Chisholm's statement: "For the first time in history groups of men can no longer survive at the expense of other groups . . . No government is yet geared to function according to this new concept."

The great question is, How could Mr. Mills' idea be put into effect? First of all, obviously, it would have to be stated again and again, with clear arguments for its support. For this purpose, the publishers of the nation's newspapers would have to be persuaded to print it. Journals of minority opinion can do their share, but so revolutionary a conception of national policy will

need more than minority support. The only way even tentative steps of unilateral disarmament could gain more than minority support would be through widespread recognition that there is absolutely no other alternative to "the suicide of mankind."

Here, we need the voices of the experts. We need to hear from the atomic scientists on this subject. We have heard from Linus Pauling and a few others, but we need to hear from them all—all of them, that is, who take and support this view. It seems at least possible that if enough such men would speak out in unequivocal terms, through SANE or on some such platform, the important newspapers would be obliged to give space to what they say. It is also possible that national leaders willing to sacrifice their immediate political future might also decide to spread the word that *there is no alternative* to global suicide short of some kind of independent peace initiative.

There would of course be angry and powerful opposition. The movement for peace would have to learn to cope with this opposition for as long as it lasts.

The second step necessary to putting Mr. Mills' proposal into effect would involve elementary lessons in psychology concerning the basis of group behavior. Mr. Mills gets at this part of the problem by asking a question:

"Can we trust the Russians?" The answer is No. As a simple matter of faith, we cannot trust the elite of any great power state. We cannot—we, meaning ordinary men and women—cannot trust our own leaders, either; nor the CIA, the top echelons of the Pentagon, nor the men of SAC. We cannot trust de Gaulle or "the French." All of which is merely to say: "It's dangerous all over."

Any state, any power, can be trusted only insofar as what is at issue appears to be in its own interest. The useful question, accordingly, is not, can this or that nation or elite be trusted? but, first, what do they believe is to their interest?

The principle, here, is to be willing to study how other people think, and put our trust in that. Here we need other experts—the psychologists.

The psychologists are quite able to describe in simple terms, comprehensible to the average person, how people think and may be expected to think. They are making these explanations all the time. They should address their skills to the issues of war and peace and how the peoples of the various nations think about these issues—how the Russians think, how the Chinese think, how the Americans think, and, if possible, why. A good illustration of this sort of analysis is found in the paper, "The Non-Violent Alternative," recently prepared by Dr. Jerome Frank, psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University, and widely broadcast throughout the United States. (This paper is also available in pamphlet form from Acts for Peace, 1730 Grove Street, Berkeley 9, Calif., and American Friends Service Committee centers in various cities, at 20 cents a copy.) We need a Bulletin of the Psychological Scientists to match the work of those who contribute to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

There are of course a number of physicists and psychologists who are already doing all they can along these lines. We need to add to their number and their strength, and give what they say all the publicity and support that we can. When this has been accomplished, or partly accomplished, it will be easy to see what ought to be done next.