

ANOTHER KIND OF EVOLUTION

THESE are days of dark depression for many men, but there is a way of looking at present affairs that may give rise to encouragement and bright hopes.

What, at the outset, is the case against the present? It is simply that the habitual modes of human behavior become incredibly dangerous when armed with the incommensurable forces of atomic nuclei. We are not worse than we were. We are only more powerful. We are not more irresponsible, although we seem to be when we see what begins as ordinary irresponsibility communicate its multiplying disorder through the world with the speed of modern transport and modern communications.

Men have not become more evil, but for the first time in history the evil that has been with and in us for ages is now held up to view—thrown on a screen, as it were, for all to see. We should not, however, say that there have been no *changes*, for the experience of seeing this evil precipitates certain other effects. The moral pressure to act against evil, once subjective, is now becoming objective. The formidable image of the mushroom cloud is a symbol of the common guilt—the guilt of all who share in the not negligible comforts, conveniences and pleasures of the twentieth century, for they must also accept their part in the wars and machines of war which belong to twentieth-century civilization.

It is fair to say that the most noticeable difference between our time and other epochs of history has been brought by the transformation of our lives by modern technology. There are of course all sorts of psychic repercussions which grow out of this change, but the change itself is external and manifestly brought by the extraordinary scientific and engineering talents of the age. If we look at this change simply as a dramatic illustration of what people call "progress," then we are indeed blind, failing to see how the innovations of technology strike our society with lightning blows. Whole industries are dispensed with by a single invention. The skills of thousands of men, on which they

depend for their livelihood, are rendered obsolete. The environment of the young is altered within the space of a generation from a world largely responsive to the rhythms of nature into a world of jerky mechanical motions with cycles set to please our own desires. The machines give a specious sort of "command" over the external environment. A vulgar *hubris* afflicts the young almost as an air they breathe. Meanwhile, thoughtful people see the vast distance all must go to order their lives with moral intelligence and genuine consideration for others, and at the same time see the dreadful indifference of the multitude to the extraordinary responsibilities of the present. The comparison can hardly be borne. Not unnaturally, there is widespread nostalgic longing for the simpler days when human behavior was more closely limited by circumstances. Only a century ago, simple conceptions of duty could be understood by almost any man. Duty, in those days, was not obviously planetary. The radius of a man's action was short by comparison, and measurable. His obligations were immediate and more intensely felt. Morality was personal and the community exerted needed controls.

Once we have acknowledged the import of these changes, to continue to stare at them hopelessly becomes foolish. One thing, at least, we can do, in response to the desperation of the present. We can begin to look about for other views of man than the one we hold, and other views of human ends than the ones we have been pursuing. The present may be, as J. B. Priestley has suggested, a time of *waiting*, but while we are waiting we can investigate fresh directions of thought. We can drop, for example, the heavy burden of Victorian optimism which has led us to such great disappointments and propose a radically different account of "progress"—or, if not of progress, of the meaning of human undertakings.

Speaking of the rapid transformations of the contemporary scene, Czeslaw Milosz said recently:

. . . a new dimension of history, understood as a whole, appears in all its dependencies. We deplore the dying out of local customs and local traditions, but perhaps the rootlessness of modern man is not so great, if through individual effort he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him.

Suppose we take this suggestion seriously and say to ourselves: What were men about a hundred years ago, what were they *after*, that brought on the kind of a world we have now? Why were their virtues insufficient? Their objectives, after all, were only the objectives which are said to belong naturally to every human being. They sought the things that most men are still seeking. They wanted a decent share of the material goods of the world, some leisure for personal enjoyment, an orderly social community to secure their opportunities for personal betterment, and the freedom to pursue these ends. The "social question" is hardly at issue for such goals. These are the things that men wanted, and they wanted them personally or they wanted them socially. There is no essential difference between the substantial material goals of the capitalist and those of the socialist society. The socialists say that they have a way of assuring that *all* men will reach the goals, instead of just the clever and acquisitive people, whereas the capitalists say that the socialists are sure to get bogged down in bureaucracy and waste, so that instead of everybody reaching the goals, the entire society will live at a lower level and, moreover, be coerced and propagandized into accepting it as satisfactory. But we are not looking at the relative merits of these claims; we are looking at the idea of a "good life," and in both cases it is practically the same. The end, for both systems, is some sort of optimum "condition" of life. It is circumstantial.

Now the thing that is most impressive about the condition of life achieved in the middle years of the twentieth century is that it is unstable, unpredictable, and characterized by circumstances which for many are at once frustrating and irrelevant. There are dozens of symptoms of sickness in our circumstances; or, you might say that the symptoms are in the kind of attachments we have for the

circumstances. Millions upon millions of people are working at jobs they dislike for money they are obliged to spend almost immediately, simply to keep up with the artificial standards of living which give them their sense of identity. This is of course true mostly of the middle class society of the United States, but the supposed "prosperity" of middle-class Americans is also the sort of "fulfillment" toward which the imitators of the affluent society are striving, in other parts of the world, so that the judgment has universal application. People in Asia, bitten by the "progressive" bug, seem to be walking into the same trap. Their only hope lies in discovering what is happening to them before they have turned the paths to these goals into rigidly compulsive institutions, and the justification of pursuing the goals into a secular religion.

At this point, we should like to suggest the possibility that the disintegrating forces affecting modern society at so many levels may be regarded as in fact expressions of a beneficent law of evolution—the kind of evolution going on in the human species, as distinguished from the organic evolution of the animals. This is obviously the suggestion of some kind of "purpose" at work in history, but no implication of a theistic origin for this purpose is intended. You could say, perhaps, that the idea is that purposiveness is an intrinsic characteristic of self-conscious life, and let it go at that.

During the past century, human affairs have been subjected to scores of powerful dislocating influences. Modern man has been *mauled* by his own history. The social institutions he created, while not without their admirable qualities, have grown into tyrannical powers. The State is the most dramatic example of this disastrous development. Nationalism and sovereignty, once concepts associated with liberating destiny, have become the Franksteins of behavior patterns. The corporation, various contemporary scholars have shown, while brilliantly efficient in certain respects, has distorted the political life of the social community through its overwhelming economic power and self-serving economic ends. Mass culture, spread around the world by technology, is rapidly destroying the colorful uniqueness of indigenous cultures and

replacing individual craftsmanship with dull, technological uniformities. The products of industry flow out like a molten, plastic sea, with chromium-plated white-caps, sweeping into every rivulet of community life, annihilating distance, inexorably making everything the same, stamping a vulgar trademark on every little open space.

There is of course another side to all this. Technology also brings tools—good tools—to people who need them. But with the tools come the propaganda, the selling, the multiplication of desires, and eventually the idea of a push-button utopia as the final goal. In this role, technology is the destroyer of the local and the personal and the private. It externalizes all values, rationalizes all local oddities, and quantifies all goods. Sooner or later, people say, with the help of technology, you'll be able to buy *anything*.

So, by the rapid acceleration of the "progressive" process, men are brought to an illusory fulfillment which turns out to be a deprivation. Everything is done *for* them. They participate as cogs or clerks or minor executives in the Big Machine, and for reward they have the ice-cubes when they get home, and the leisure to spend all evening in front of the stare-box in the living room. At last they get enough, more than enough, to eat, but they have become hostages to the system. We don't have alchemists any more, but we have food chemists, who may be worse, since we have to eat what they make. We don't have gladiators any more. But the gladiators, for all their brutality, had sense enough to revolt from time to time, while the modern professionals of destruction are busy scheming up bacterial poisons to wipe out whole populations, and are honored for their efforts as pillars of the State.

The time will come when all these insane anomalies will create their own reactions of disillusionment and disgust. Then the question will arise, what *are* our goals?

The point is that the tank-like advance of "progress" is grinding into fragments the forms which gave scope to the limited ideals of past eras. There is a kind of universal erosion of the very meaning of the goals which until very recently most

men pursued. The virtues which once were embodied in the labors to reach those goals are thus made to seem pointless and unnecessary. First to recognize the increasing aimlessness of what the great majority regarded as "normal" human activities were the artists and writers, who early in the century publicly declared their contempt for conventional ideas of achievement. A similar feeling is reflected in the existentialist disdain for "respectability" and for people who take too seriously their private acquisitive ends. A somewhat proletarian version of this spirit of alienation and rejection appears in contemporary American life among the Beatniks, and finds more reserved expression in the poets and dramatists of despair.

It is important, however, to recognize that an analysis of this sort is bound to be dominated by the effects of institutional influence. The external shape of modern life is determined by the enormous institutions of technological culture, whose products and activity patterns already reach across national boundaries, creating the tiresome monotony of the man-made environment. Go to one super-market, and you've seen them all. Visit one small town in the United States, and you'll know pretty much what to expect of all the others. Live for a while in one of the large, tract-house developments, which seem to spring up almost overnight on the American scene, and before long you are persuaded that not only are the houses all alike, but the people as well. Meanwhile mass publishing and mass distribution of magazines and newspapers add their deadly uniformities to cultural attitudes and opinions.

Of course, differences among the way people think and live still remain. But they are less in evidence. A much stronger case for everything said by Ortega in 1930 in his *Revolt of the Masses* could be put together today, and not only because of the progress of technology. The prevailing concepts of "reality" are now mass concepts, almost without exception. The idea of survival, for example, is strictly a mass concept. The individual does not survive, in the current meaning of the term. The *nation* survives. Accordingly, there is a strong tendency to think more of national identities than of individual identities. The individual is impotent,

practically by definition. Then, the managers of contemporary societies, because of the ascendancy of military considerations, have the habit of "thinking big." They measure armies by millions, possible casualties from nuclear war by tens of millions, and money in terms of the billions available to them through taxation of the mass society. It is natural that individuals tend to lose all significance for people habituated to think in this way.

Of course, you can argue—and it ought on occasion to be argued—that the foregoing is an entirely one-sided picture of modern life. You can say, and be quite right, that it is possible to find all sorts of variety in American life. There are still some quaint places left in the United States, and there are people who have not allowed the uniformities of technological culture to remodel their lives. And there are times, if you need to get from one place to another fast, when you feel a great admiration for the experts who have made rapid travel possible, and with so little fuss. We'll even stipulate that much of what has been said above is a drastic distortion of the way people live and how they feel. The institutional picture is not the whole picture. It shows only the "outside" of things.

But this admission does not affect our point, which is that saying "things are not that bad" is not sufficient reason for refusing to recognize the inexorable trend toward depersonalization being pressed forward by both the mechanics and the psychology of a technology-dominated society. The greatest mistake we could make would be to be content to argue that the trend needs to be "controlled," to say only that we need to be watchful, in order to prevent technological attitudes from going "too far." For this would be to suppose that all we need is some kind of "regulation" of the abuses and dehumanizing tendencies of a technological society, instead of a thorough-going reevaluation of the ends which have given our society the pattern that it has assumed. Unless we are willing to look critically at the goals which have absorbed the energies of the great majority of men for the past two or three hundred years, we shall have neither reason nor opportunity to break out of the vicious circle of the present—which is not a circle at all, but a

descending spiral of mechanized self-degradation and self-destruction.

After this is said, it becomes important to go back to our earlier qualification and to take full account of the positive human qualities which are, so to say, being forced underground. A man's life in some respects resembles a national election. The candidate who loses the election is not erased from existence because he fails to gain office. He is simply no longer in evidence. The policies he would have adopted remain potential. He has no active existence, but he is still *there*.

So with the human qualities which are submerged by the active aspects of the mass society. They are submerged. They are hidden, allowed little or no scope for expression, but they are still *there*. They cannot be ground out of existence entirely, except in the imagination of the writers of pessimistic utopian novels, such as Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* (see also his recent *Brave New World Revisited*), and George Orwell in *1984*. But we ought not to condemn these writers for "exaggerating" what has happened and is continuing to happen. They are angry and anguished witnesses of the atrophy of high human qualities. If we had no such warnings, exaggerated or not, the writers, the poets, and the artists would fail in their most fundamental responsibilities. They tell in the only vocabulary which remains to them—the vocabulary of despair—what man is making of man.

And it is certainly from this *core* part of man's nature that we are getting, in some few and distinguished instances, the expression of a mood of self-discovery which rises above the confinements and mutilations of alienation, and looks around with a new freedom and a new wonder. It is the old question, asked again, but in a modern environment, by men who have exhausted both the dreams and the desolations of the age. Such men are free in the only valid meaning of the word. They are asking who and what man is, and asking this *after* the religious doctrines have been torn to tatters, and *after* the failure of all the scientific and utilitarian panaceas has become obvious.

The asking of this question is the only possible remedy for what men today are complaining of when they speak of the suffocating influence of "conformity" and the deadly mediocrity of a culture dominated by the slogans developed by thousands of little "organization men." It is not that we are now able to expect answers to this question, but that the acceptance of the wrong answers—answers which are degrading to all human kind—is the death warrant of the human spirit. The preservers of civilization, the saviors of the world, the lovers of their fellows, are the men who insist that this question remain *open*. And the only way to keep the question open is to keep on asking it, again and again, in every possible language and idiom.

This is the only possible defense of individuality and of the integrity of the private person. For it asserts by implication that the discovery of the meaning of life is always an individual discovery. There can be no "mass" version of this meaning. It may be the same for all men as a high-level abstraction, but it is absolutely singular in its realization by all men, considered one at a time.

You can never "tell" another man who he is, what his life is for, and what he "ought" to do. These are values, meanings, conclusions which he must arrive at himself, with complete independence. This kind of answer is as private and personal as love, at the outset, although it may finally grow to a universal dimension.

And this, perhaps, is the only "answer" that we are presently able to return which we can tell to one another with some confidence and profit.

What, then, is the view of the contemporary situation which may possibly offer some hope and some encouragement? It is an interpretation of the idea of evolution which begins with the evidence men give of their intrinsic human qualities, as distinguished from the biological endowment of their physical existence. What if there should be in man a principle of thinking which has for its end, for its realization and fulfillment, the act of knowing itself, independent of any and all of its embodiments; yet a principle which requires a ground of limiting

circumstances for this act of knowing to be consummated?

If this should be the case—if man is an expression of this order of life and consciousness—then we have some hope of understanding the extraordinary inspiration and determination of the artist, and all the endless paradoxes of sublime human expression. We could see how it is possible for men of entirely different backgrounds, fields of activity, and even modes of thinking so often to come to essentially the same conclusions. It is at the level of the intuition that this sameness becomes manifest, as though men of sensibility are all crying out a single truth, or family of truths, despite the strange and alien roads they have travelled.

And if, from the desperations and exhaustions of the present—from the end-of-the-line feeling so many of us have, these days—from the extremity of danger and the terrifying blindness from which we all in our separate destinies seem at times to suffer—if from all these frightening and accelerating tendencies in our lives we can be helped to stop, to wonder, to *look about* and to ask once more who and what we are, and to accept no familiar answer, no textbook solution, then a great restoration, a full-bodied recovery in function, of what might be called our basic psychological instincts, may be on the way.

REVIEW

NOTES ON PARAPSYCHOLOGY

A MANAS subscriber from Holland who once lived near the home of the famous clairvoyant, Gerard Croiset, has called our attention to a *Family Weekly* article by Paul Deutschman which discusses Croiset's strange powers. On the basis of experiences involving personal acquaintances, and after study of the record, both our subscriber and Deutschman are convinced that Croiset's demonstrations of paranormal gifts are conclusive evidence that psychic and mental powers can transcend the known laws of physics.

Croiset has time and again helped the Dutch police with unsolved cases, bringing to bear his extraordinary ability to identify with the victim of a murder or kidnapping and, through this empathy, discover the remains of the missing person. At the Parapsychological Institute at the University of Utrecht, the director, Prof. W. C. Tenhaeff, receives Croiset's full cooperation for study of his clairvoyant capacities. As a result, an interesting theory has been developed, supported by impressive evidence. Mr. Deutschman summarizes:

It is Professor Tenhaeff's theory that in almost every case of successful paragnosis the paragnost "identifies" with his subject. "He tries to find himself in others. When you investigate, you always discover that there is some kind of connection between the life of his subject and his own—some emotional experience shared in common."

As a result, he says, paragnosts tend to "specialize." For example, Croiset's parents were both in the theater—his father a well-known actor, his mother a wardrobe mistress. But they did not live together, and a good deal of Gerard's boyhood was spent in foster homes where, he says, he was unhappy and often beaten. At the age of eight, he fell into the river and almost drowned. And in his teens he had a friend who was unjustly accused of a robbery.

Thus, his area of specialization seems to involve drownings orphans, and people wrongly accused of crimes. In almost every case, you can trace down the connecting link between his extrasensory perceptions and his past, real-life ones.

Since the wide publicizing of Dr. J. B. Rhine's parapsychology laboratory at Duke University, thousands of persons all over the world have sent to Duke accounts of their personal paranormal experiences, and it has been a large part of Rhine's work to pare down and correlate and organize this sprawling mass of material. With endless patience, Rhine has labored continually to refine his research methods so that skeptics and critics cannot seize upon technical reasons for rejecting the evidence of psi phenomena. Those who work with potential clairvoyants, at Duke and at Utrecht, are taken through a screening process, and from books such as Rhine and Pratt's *Parapsychology—Frontier Science of the Mind*, one begins to see how an initial interest in psi may be slowly developed into a form of investigation that can be legitimately termed "scientific." Under the heading, "Objective Research Methods," Rhine and Pratt write:

Originally, parapsychology as a science began with reports of spontaneous personal experiences of unexplainable nature. In the early studies emphasis was placed upon the need to authenticate such cases as allowed careful checking on the reliability of reporting. It became evident, however, that even elaborate effort in substantiating them did not furnish sufficiently unquestionable evidence to warrant a conclusion. The hypothesis was too revolutionary. Experimental methods had to be introduced for that purpose. The case study is by its nature primarily an exploratory method, it would be difficult if not impossible to convert it into a crucial method of verification.

Probably the exploratory practices in widest use are those of examining and screening individual subjects, either for participation in more conclusive experimental work or for a more elaborate exploratory program. Most commonly in such preliminary tests the investigator is dealing with a person who believes on some basis or other that he is gifted with psi capacity and wishes to know the extent of his ability. The contact between him and the experimenter may have arisen as a result of the individual's own curiosity over his spontaneous experiences or he may have been referred to the research worker by a teacher, psychiatrist, or minister. In any case, a widely adaptable preliminary test method is needed for this purpose, one that will

lend itself to a variety of conditions while still affording a reasonably accurate estimate of the ability concerned.

Well, the evidence continues to mount. In the opinion of many, the spectacular Bridey Murphy case of presumed "reincarnation" has been thoroughly discredited, yet, even here, a review of the entire Bridey Murphy episode by C. J. Ducasse indicates that there is strong residual evidence favoring paranormal factors, even though these are largely irrelevant to the issue of reincarnation. The Ducasse article appears in the January *Journal* of the American Society for Psychical Research, and is titled "How the Case of *The Search for Bridey Murphy* Stands Today." After a lengthy review, Dr. Ducasse separates what seem to him logically warranted conclusions from various less tenable views:

The outcome of our review and discussion of the Bridey Murphy case may now be summarily stated. It is, on the one hand, that neither the articles in magazines and newspapers which we have mentioned and commented upon, nor the comments of the authors of the so-called "Scientific Report" and of other psychiatrists hostile to the reincarnation hypothesis have succeeded in disproving, or even in establishing a strong case against, the possibility that many of the statements of the Bridey personality are genuinely memories of an earlier life of Virginia Tighe over a century ago in Ireland.

On the other hand, for reasons other than those which were advanced by those various hostile critics, but which there is no space here to develop, the verifications summarized by Barker, of obscure points in Ireland mentioned in Bridey's six recorded conversations with Bernstein, do not prove that Virginia is a reincarnation of Bridey, nor do they establish a particularly strong case for it. They do, on the other hand, constitute fairly strong evidence that, in the hypnotic trances, *paranormal* knowledge of one or another of several possible kinds concerning those recondite facts of nineteenth century Ireland became manifest.

COMMENTARY

NOT OPTIMISM, NOT PESSIMISM

EVIDENCE of the "awakening"—some call it only "disillusionment"—spoken of in this week's lead article may be seen in many places, from the polite prose of the BBC's *Listener* to uncompromising paragraphs in the *New Leader* by Paul Goodman.

In the *Listener* for June 23, writing in defense of "political apathy," Christopher Martin says:

. . . there can indeed be no ideology of democracy. Democracy as a political concept is not and should not be "an idea that dominates the whole of a person, his motives, his living and his thinking." Its whole virtue is that it does not expect to dominate. . . . When we laugh at the tasteless absurdities of Socialist Realism in Russia, we forget how essential it is for an ideology that all creative activity should be subordinated to its ends. For our own culture we value freedom of expression; and if we are appalled by its anti-social tendencies not only in the "beatniks" and the "angries" but in all the developments that have sprung from the wartime existentialists and whose best witness is still Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, we need at the same time to remember their positive contribution. It is that certain values—friendship, love, and so on, values irrelevant to the organization of society—are important.

In the *New Leader*, Paul Goodman discusses Irving Wechsler's complaint (in *Reflections of an Angry Middle-Aged Editor*) that the "beats" and other "apolitical young people" of America should get busy as Americans for Democratic Action. Goodman replies:

This book . . . quite misses the point, for by and large the beatniks are not apolitical. They are programmatically defecting from the major state-structure of our times: the Organization of semi-monopolies, the Pentagon, the FBI, Communications, Personnel, etc.; and they are using the most relevant means to combat such a structure, namely, non-violent direct action: "I *won't* do that, I *will* do this." We anarchists have always urged that the right method is to create little islands of freedom and nature, and some of these kids are trying to. The trouble with their anarchism is not that it is apolitical, but that they don't know anything, technologically or

culturally: Therefore, they are unimaginative; therefore, some of them lapse into drink and drugs and trivial music and poetry. . . .

Wechsler . . . points out that the draft law is a foolish and wicked thing. It ought to be abolished. But what happens when they come after the kid in his individual life, right now? He ought not to do what is foolish and wicked: Ought he then to dodge? to be a conscientious objector? to go to jail? to picket with his fellows in the same plight and be forced into every step under protest? These, it seems to me, are the interesting questions for a young fellow, and we find nothing of them in this book.

This point of view, these questions, must some day animate a surge of inescapable logic until they are being asked everywhere and all the time. Actually, nothing else is worth talking about except those essential human values—which the *Listener* with its "and so on" assumes all good people are devoted to—until they become the common ground of man's behavior.

In *Dissent* for Summer, 1960, Nicola Chiaromonte writes of Albert Camus, whom he knew and looks back upon as the man who articulated for these agonized years the vision of "man's transcendence in respect to history; that is the truth which no social imperative can erase."

Readers who admire Camus have different ways of recognizing his genius. We found it in his book, *The Rebel*. For Chiaromonte it came out clearly in a talk Camus made at Columbia University in 1946. Chiaromonte reconstructs this talk from his notes. It is a luminous expression of what many of the present and coming generation feel but do not wholly understand:

We [Camus said] were born at the beginning of the First World War. As adolescents we had the crisis of 1929; at twenty, Hitler. Then came the Ethiopian War, the Civil War in Spain, and Munich. These were the foundations of our education. Next came the Second World War, the defeat, and Hitler in our homes and cities. Born and bred in such a world, what did we believe in? Nothing. Nothing except the obstinate negation in which we were forced to close ourselves from the very beginning. The world in which we were called to exist was an absurd world, and there was no other world in which we could take

refuge. The world of culture was beautiful, but it was not real. And when we found ourselves face to face with Hitler's terror, in what values could we take comfort, what values could we oppose to negation? In none. If the problem had been the bankruptcy of a political ideology, or a system of government, it would have been simple enough. But what had happened came from the very root of man and society. There was no doubt about this, and it was confirmed day after day not so much by the behavior of criminals but by that of the average man. The facts showed that men deserved what was happening to them. Their way of life had so little value; and the violence of the Hitlerian negation was in itself logical. But it was unbearable and we fought it.

Now that Hitler has gone, we know a certain number of things. The first is that the poison which impregnated Hitlerism has not been eliminated; it is present in each of us. Whoever today speaks of human existence in terms of power efficiency and "historical tasks" spreads it. He is an actual or potential assassin. For if the problem of man is reduced to any kind of "historical task," he is nothing but the raw material of history, and one can do anything one pleases with him. Another thing we have learned is that we cannot accept any optimistic conception of existence, any happy ending whatsoever. But if we believe that optimism is silly, we also know that pessimism about the action of man among his fellows is cowardly.

We opposed terror because it forces us to choose between murdering and being murdered; and it makes communication impossible. This is why we reject any ideology that claims control over all of human life.

There may not be any great affirmative truths in this utterance, but there are no *lies* in it, and this is a great beginning for a writer who found himself commanding the attention of the civilized world of the twentieth century. And there are endless affirmative *implications* for the inheritors of Camus' vision to develop.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

"ROLE-PLAYING"—RUSSIA AND AMERICA

IN one of a series of articles for the Manchester *Guardian Weekly* dealing with Russia in transition, Victor Zorza reveals that Russian youths may be the key to an eventual liberalization of Soviet politics. While the great majority of young Russians still passively accept the teachings and commands of their political elders, a rapidly increasing number are asking embarrassing questions. And today, to the benefit of the entire world, they are allowed to get away with it. As soon as the terrorist methods of political control were relaxed, the young people who attend political meetings demonstrated their capacity to ask searching questions. In a carefully planned and controlled State, the role of the young is always defined by the society's managers, but when questioning begins, the first thing to be challenged is the obligation of the young to be "true believers." As Mr. Zorza puts it:

Official propaganda is coming home to roost, and the young people are no longer prepared to accept the State's claim that by receiving social services and other benefits, they are in some way beholden to the Communist party. Writers of letters to "Izvestia" have claimed that, in providing these services for the citizens, the State is quite properly making a settlement of accounts with them, since it is merely redistributing the wealth they had created. They saw no reason, therefore, why "this natural activity on the part of the State should be regarded as some kind of favour."

Young people in Russia not only want to know the answers to a great many questions that agitators regard as "pointed," but they are even beginning to supply their own answers. The party cannot but regard this as potentially a most dangerous development. The questioners are supplying their own answers precisely because those given by the trained agitators are unsatisfactory. . . .

The party wants such questions to be asked, and to be asked in public, because it fears the answers that may be arrived at privately. The young people are thus thrown back on their own resources and their

incipient opposition feeds on the secrecy which surrounds it. They are most of them socialists in that they can conceive of no other system but one in which the means of production are nationally owned, but few, even among the most enthusiastic "builders of communism," seem prepared to accept consciously and actively all the implications of the Marxist teaching. A great many may accept it passively, without laying much store by it, as many children in a Christian society accept the teaching of Christ. But those youths in Russia who consciously seek in Marxism an understanding of the world and a guide to action in the wider sense, who probe and seek and question, rarely find the answer.

In the United States, most of the questions about "role-playing" are being asked by the psychologists—against the backdrop of the personal life of men and women who feel no intellectual or moral challenges. In a study of "Parents of Emotionally Disturbed Children," reported in the February *Psychiatry*, Ezra Vogel indicates that rigid role-playing by parents produces corresponding behavior in their children. Dr. Vogel writes:

Not only was there greater physical separation between the husband and wife in disturbed couples than in control couples of the same ethnic and class backgrounds, but there was also a relatively rigid differentiation of husband and wife roles. The differences in the amount of role segregation were most striking in the areas of child care and child management. In most of the nondisturbed families, the fathers spent a great deal of time with children, took them places, and joined with their wives in discussing things that involved the children. This was generally not true for the disturbed families. In the disturbed families, even if the husband took part, usually either the husband or the wife was responsible for the children at a given time and there was little overlapping in their contacts with the children. Often one parent knew little about what the other did while with the children. In addition, management problems were left to the wife, and the husband participated only in what they considered an emergency.

On the other hand, it is natural for the young to protest a conception of life which buries the *person* in the "role." While it is certainly beneficial for young people to have a conception of the functions they can perform at a given stage

of development, there is always, in this context, the prospect of graduating to other and more significant opportunities and responsibilities. When a youth enlarges his role, he passes a kind of initiatory test. But when the parents are inflexible, there is no break-through between parent and child to mutual appreciation of the fact that transition and progression are the essence of human experience. Dr. Vogel continues with a description of parental conduct which is harmful to the child—conduct revealing basic insecurity in the relationship between the parents themselves:

Although only in the areas of child care and handling of finances were consistent differences observed between the disturbed and control couples, there was a general pattern of difference, regardless of area of activity. In the disturbed couples, generally one person performed any given activity. There was little flexibility in who performed the activity, and almost no activities were carried on jointly by the spouses at the same time. Each spouse's spheres of activity were kept clearly separate from those of the partner. This meant that they did not have to consult with each other about the tasks they performed, but that each could carry out his own activities without interfering with the other. In the nondisturbed families, more activities were carried on jointly, and there was also considerable flexibility in who performed which activities. For example, husband and wife sometimes participated together in cooking, serving, or cleaning. Some husbands in the disturbed families did participate in the housework, but generally by means of inflexible assignments and alone rather than in cooperation with the wives.

Apparently because Russian "political elders" feel less emotionally insecure than they used to, room has been made for some healthy divergences of opinion. And, as Dr. Vogel shows, it is only when adult minds are free from fear and able to dispense with devices for emotional protection that the young can develop the security of true individuality and integrity.

It seems to us that the only hope for a harmonious world society lies in the nature of adult concern for the problems of youth. The last White House Conference on children and youth, held last March, was a good omen, raising issues

far more important than any problems of politics or international relations. The primary intent of the conference was described as follows:

Study and understanding of the values and ideals of our society; the effect on the development of children and youth of the rapid changes in this country and the world, and how families, religion, government, community services—such as education, health, and welfare—peer groups, and the behavior of adults in their interactions with children and youth deter or enable individual fulfillment and constructive service to humanity.

The Russians, we think, are capable of similar searching interests and it may be hoped that, eventually, there will be constant interchange between Russia and the United States at the level of youth study. MANAS recently (August 17) noted the favorable response of some Russian leaders to a proposal made by Dr. F. Fremont-Smith that the two nations join hands in protecting each other's children, and this is surely an encouraging sign.

FRONTIERS Chessman on Religion

[We should have wanted to publish this letter for its contents alone, but the fact that it was written by Caryl Chessman a few days before his execution, makes it doubly interesting. The surprising thing is that it was released for publication at all. It first appeared on the Church page of a small weekly newspaper, the Newport Harbor *News Press*, issue of May 13, and is here reprinted entire. The second letter (referred to in the text), although scheduled for publication on May 20, did not appear.—Editors.]

SHORTLY before his death in San Quentin's gas chamber, Caryl Chessman wrote two letters to the Rev. Herbert H. Richardson of Redondo Beach who was the convict's childhood Sunday School teacher and only clergyman invited to Chessman's cell in 12 years.

The letters contain Chessman's last attempt to explain his concept of Christianity.

Rev. Richardson, a Biola College professor as well as pastor, pleaded with Chessman "Where have I failed you?" Although he had determined not to discuss his knowledge of Chessman's spiritual views, he relented ". . . in the hope we could find an answer to help other young people. . ."

In this first letter, dated April 9 (postmarked April 12) the thread of the conversation is picked up following Rev. Richardson's visit to Chessman on Death Row a few days prior.

Dear Rev. Richardson:

Prior to receiving your April 4 letter I had turned in for processing a request for approval of visiting and correspondence privileges with you. While I as yet have not been given formal notice of such approval, I assume it has been or will be granted and thus am taking this afternoon, during a period of relative quiet, to reply. As the date of my execution grows closer, I anticipate, such having been the case in the past, that the days increasingly will become more crowded and hectic.

I did enjoy our talk. However, I would be less than honest if I said my views toward spiritual things have altered. They have not. I remain an agnostic, and it is only fair that I state this to you frankly. You write: "I only wish that you had the measure of confidence in me that would enable you to trust my knowledge and my ability to understand these truths." In my judgment, it is not a question of trusting either your judgment or ability. Rather, each of us, if he is to retain and maintain his integrity as a person, must seek truth in his own way. Bitter experience has taught me to be wary of a sectarian truth, especially when it is capitalized and surrounded, if not rigidly imprisoned, by dogma. Neither can I accept the Christian tenet, based upon an Aristotelian two-valued system of logic, that each of us must make an either/or decision; that, in sum, we must believe, and if we do not believe we are damned disbelievers. Having acquired some measure of historical awareness, I must seek truth rationally; I must keep in mind the terrible consequences to civilization and to human dignity—the Dark Ages, the Inquisition—when Augustinian "logic" and Tertullian's irrational dictum, *Certum est, quia impossibile est* ("I believe because it is impossible") prevailed at the point of a clerical sword.

Please understand: I am neither irreligious nor anti-religious. And that is my point. If a man has free will, then he must be allowed the freedom to exercise his will freely. He must not be told by another, "You must trust my judgment and ability, and so you must believe," else this other will be destroying freedom in the name of "truth"—and the function of truth, if we deal with reality rather than Orwellian semantics, is to liberate the mind (or spirit, call it what you will), not put the mind in bondage. Restated, categorical imperatives, Kantian or otherwise, derived not from observable or demonstrable phenomenon, are not the charitable servants of Christianity, in my considered opinion, but are its most insidious enemies.

Are you familiar with the Pelagian heresy, so-called? Actually, the historical evidence seems to show, it was not Pelagius but his pupil, Julian of Eclanum, who largely authored and disseminated the "heretic" notion that, since the church (although grudgingly) accepted the premise that man is free to choose between good and evil because of his free will, the idea, it followed, of inherited sin or inherited guilt was and is unthinkable. This won Pelagius exile and anathema; and it is Augustine who was credited mainly with refuting the "heresy"—and who, in the process, with his genius for dialectic, supplied Christianity with one of its most hopeless dualisms: predestination and free will. Yet, granting theology its most essential postulate, this irrationally must be done or an equally hopeless paradox is posed, for how, if "free" will is truly free, can any man be eternally doomed to torment for failing to make the "right" choice, not because of perversity, but because of a lack of compelling evidence or experience? Logically, of course, he cannot.

You may reply: The complexities of doctrine and casuistry should not stand between man and his God. But this wholly overlooks that your conceptions, however personal and eclectically chosen, nevertheless are a synthesis of the doctrines of other men, and you have a high ethical obligation to explain, if you can, and certainly to try to resolve, their impossible illogic before you can ask another "to trust (your) knowledge and (your) ability to understand these truths." If in fact you possess both such knowledge and ability, then the greatest contribution you can make to the whole of mankind is to communicate the components of this knowledge, not simply its emotional or spiritual total, and to define precisely what you mean by ability. Otherwise, you would be asking me to blind myself in order to see, and while my vision is now, in the figurative sense I employ the term, admittedly imperfect, I do not see how putting out my eyes can improve my ability to see and to evaluate my perceptions. Perhaps you

would be willing to explain. I am certain you will concur that my request for an explanation is neither unfair nor unreasonable.

Kindly pass along my best regards to Mrs. Richardson and your family.

Sincerely,

CARYL