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THE GENIUS OF HUMAN BEINGS

LOOKING around for a word to identify a portion of man's being—the portion which belongs, or ought to belong, to the man himself—we thought of reviving the term *genius* in the sense of "a spirit presiding over the destiny of a person," and then using it to mean the part of the man which makes him himself and no other. The word will probably work for this purpose, but there are difficulties. In the case of those whose sense of identity is largely made up of their alliance with groups or institutions, "genius" seems at least inappropriate. Perhaps we can say that what a man does with his genius, such as ignoring its capacity to establish individuality, can not destroy its existence, although it may neutralize it or hide it from view.

What we should like to be able to show, in this article, is that what a man does with his genius, in the sense we have given it, determines his relationship with the institutions of the society in which he lives; and, when large numbers of men are considered, what they do with their genius actually creates the institutions, determining their character, scope, and power.

In order to set out this problem, we might consider the issue of the separation of Church and State in a democratic society. The philosophical interpretation of the principle of separation is that there is an inviolable core of self-determining intelligence in every human being which the authority of the State must leave completely alone.

The political interpretation, we might argue, is somewhat different. It would take cognizance of the fact that there are several—in fact, dozens—of churches or denominations, any one of which, if permitted to ally itself with the State, would gain the power to tyrannize over the others or even drive them out of the society altogether.

The limitation of the political interpretation of the principle is fairly obvious. In cases where the practical exigencies of government seem to demand recognition of and even relationships with religious institutions, some kind of statistical measure of the major or "important" religious groups is arrived at, and the relationships are planned accordingly—as, for example, in the provision of chaplains who are variously Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, in the armed forces. For such purposes, the State is prevailed upon to indicate an interest in the "spiritual" welfare of the people, and being an administrative power with concrete objectives—the State does not "think" or determine "value"; it simply manipulates objects, sometimes human objects, such as men in the mass—the State must have simple, workable definitions of what is "spiritual." So the State has reference to the religious institutions of the time and learns that men who have completed certain work in a seminary have been given a piece of paper which is evidence of their qualification as spiritual objects. Then the State puts these spiritual objects in the proper positions in the distribution of the military objects—the men in the services—and rests content that equity, if not separation, has been preserved in the relations of Church and State.

This is more or less the situation in America at the present time. For many people, it is quite satisfactory, but for some others it seems a serious invasion of the religious or philosophical privacy of the individual. What does this mean? It means that for some people, the function of an accepted religious institution exhausts the possibility of the religious life, or that they do not think of religion as having any real existence apart from accepted religious institutions, it following that the practical "democratic" compromise achieved by the State in the distribution of its chaplains is above criticism.

For the others, it means an offensive imposition of "official" definitions of religion—or of acceptable religion, in three different brands—upon the military institution. The matter of the chaplains is of course only one example of the breaching of the wall of separation between Church and State.

The private individual or citizen is in a position to argue that *any* sort of recognition of religious groups, no matter how powerful, is an abridgment of his religious freedom, for State recognition lends a kind of authority to the dominant religious groups, coloring the national life to this extent, and even implies that the individual who belongs to none of these groups has something important missing in his life. He has the right to complain, saying, "Yes, we have complete religious freedom in the United States, so long as you are Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. But if you are none of these, then you are an Unclassified Man, and may even have trouble getting a job, since job-givers, like the State, usually have an unfortunate preference for easily labelled objects."

At this point someone may say impatiently, "Well, that's the way people are, and since they are in the majority there's nothing you can do about it. Besides, why should you be *right?"*

This is the old retort—the taking of a vote to settle what is essentially a philosophical question. The question of being "right," in the sense of demanding political action because you are right, is not at issue at all. It should be obvious that this situation is not going to change until there are a lot more "Unclassified Men," for whom churches do not exhaust religious or philosophical possibilities.

There is also a historical problem, or a problem in cultural anthropology, here. Which came first, the religious institution or the independent religious thinker?

A feeling of satisfaction at public recognition of three major religious attitudes or denominations is a somewhat half-baked answer to this question, which says that religious institutions came first.

There is, however, some excuse for this conclusion. The primitive societies we have knowledge of seem always to be held tightly in the grip of tradition. The taboos must not be broken. The rituals must be performed. The ancestral beliefs must be transmitted. The individual is shaped by these forces, and not the other way around. The man who does not live according to the rules is an alien, a disturber of the peace, a corruptor of youth. He is either summarily killed, exiled, or marked for total disgrace to end his influence.

It is meaningless, at this point, to say whether the law of tradition is either good or bad. It may be good for some people and bad for others. But even here we have to look twice at words like "good" and "bad." Their real meaning, in this context, is "well-adjusted" and "maladjusted." Books like Viereck's *The Unadjusted Man,* Bisch's *Be Glad You're Neurotic,* Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and various writings of A. H. Maslow show that judgments of the rules of a given society depend upon the criterion for defining the good society. Do you want a well-conducted society, or a society bursting with unruly spirits who want to change the rules?

Probably some common-sense answers to most of these questions can be worked out—the common sense being exhibited in the lack of finality of the answers. You might for example say that, on the whole, you wouldn't load a four-year-old with responsibilities of independent decision which need all the resources of an eight-year-old—which means that the protecting matrix of custom must vary with individuals, according to their capacities.

Then, of course, comes the question: Who defines the potentialities of individuals, and who models the institutions to suit the general possibilities of an entire society?

This brings into play all the old questions and arguments about theocratic and secular societies. The most ancient model of a theocratic society that we can think of is embodied in the *Institutes of Manu*—a distribution of authority and role which is worth a great deal of unprejudiced study. Then there is Plutarch's account of Numa, the retired Etruscan gentleman whom the early Romans prevailed upon to rule over them. Numa, according to Plutarch, studied the Romans carefully and created a socio-cultural order suited to their needs and potentialities.

In all these ancient societies, the element of the supernatural played the major role in establishing the authority of the laws and customs. Socrates suffered death for defying the prestige of the supernatural element in the Athenian society. He threatened the validity of the "social controls."

It is fair to say that not until the French and American revolutions was there established a system of law and government which ignored the supernatural element or carefully excluded it from the sources of political authority. A generation or so after the American Revolution, a Christian minister became perturbed over this omission and recorded his anxieties in a sermon, later printed in the *Albany Advertiser* in 1831 (cited by Harry Elmer Barnes in *History and Social Intelligence).* The concerned minister said:

> When the war was over and the victory over our enemies won, and the blessings and happiness of liberty and peace were secured, the Constitution was framed and God was neglected. He was not merely forgotten. He was absolutely voted out of the Constitution. The proceedings, as published by Thompson, the secretary, and the history of the day, show that the question was gravely debated whether God should be in the Constitution or not, and after a solemn debate he was deliberately voted out of it. . . . There is not only in the theory of our government no recognition of God's laws and sovereignty, but its practical operation, its administration, has been conformable to its theory. Those who have been called to administer the government have not been men making any public profession of Christianity. Washington was a man of valor and wisdom. He was esteemed by the whole world as a great and good man but he was not a professing Christian.

In recent years there has been a tendency to minimize the neutrality of the Founding Fathers toward orthodox religion and to stress the "Judeo-Christian" character of the American cultural heritage. It is also suggested that whatever the "legalistic" interpretation of the American theory of government, the fact remains that the great majority of the people are of Christian background, so that the United States may be fairly called a "Christian nation." There is no need to deny that the religion of Christianity has profoundly colored the life of the American people, nor the psychological reality that no normal human being is without attitudes which are, at root, religious—the perfect naturalistic objectivity of the ideal "Secular State" being a complete impossibility—but what remains at issue is the claim that political institutions can somehow have a "religious" character. Expressions like "nation" are equivocal. The more talk there is of "Christian nations," the more likelihood is there of a State Religion developing in the United States. This would mean, in practical terms, a return to the traditional form of society, in which religion and politics combine into a single authoritative control over the life of the individual. There would be very little difference, functionally, between such a society and the society ruled by the Communist State.

Let us now return to the idea of the "genius" of the individual, meaning that portion of the individual which is entirely his own—which cannot be institutionalized, or moulded by some outside authority, without an essential loss or suppression of the humanity of the individual. We find in Aristotle's *Politics* a recognition of the importance of this part of the human being. In *Aristotle*, a study of the Greek philosopher's thought, Werner Jaeger observes:

> Here for the first time the antinomy between state and individual becomes a scientific problem, though as yet only in a very restricted sense, since it is only the philosophical ego, . . . that may have

> interests higher than the state's to represent. For the ordinary citizen who is simply the product of the reigning political principles there is no such problem in the ancient world. His membership in the state exhausts his nature.

What this means is that, from the viewpoint of the free human being, *tension* and occasionally conflict between the individual and the State is a necessary and wholly natural situation—actually, a situation to be expected and even welcomed, by reason of the nature of the State and the nature of the individual. During the evolution of Western society, the antinomy which once applied only to Aristotle's reflective, retired country gentleman was expanded to include every member of the political community. The judgment represented by this view is that politics does not exhaust human potentiality.

For the individual, this judgment means, in practical terms, that he says to the State, "I will give a portion of myself to you, obeying your laws and paying your taxes, but the inward, free portion of myself you cannot have." The standard interpretation of the American political tradition is that free people gather together to devise a social contract under which they delegate to the government certain rights and powers, reserving all undelegated rights and powers to the individual.

This is the *rational* theory of a social institution, as distinguished from the institutions which come into being by supernatural or divine dispensation.

Now when there is a tendency for this rational institution, made by man as an instrument to serve his welfare, to embrace, shield and further religious institutions, which claim a supernatural origin (functionally, an irrational origin), almost immediately the supernaturalism of the religious institutions begins to infect the rational institution. This is peculiarly unfortunate, for the reason that it tends to suppress the admission that tension between the individual and the State is natural and necessary. Only in corrupt and cynical societies can there be admission of tension between the religious institution and the individual. A striking example of this admission is found in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, when the young Erasmus journeys to Rome to discover that behind their outward conformity princes of the Church were living as libertines and sophisticated unbelievers. Where there is such systematic hypocrisy, an entirely new set of institutional relationships, subtle in their erosion of human character, come into being. Some of the nuances of these relationships form the substance of novels like Silone's *Bread and Wine.* They are the basis of the humor in Hasek's *Good Soldier Schweik,* with their gloomier aspects developed in Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-four* and Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle.*

The totally political society is under the continuous necessity to prove and insist that membership in the State exhausts the full potentialities of the individual. Nonpolitical ends can have no meaning except an immoral or deviationist meaning in the total political society. In these circumstances, the State finds itself obliged to devise charismatic effects to engage and exhaust the non-political emotions of the people. The idea of the individual must be carefully watched, lest it develop values which cannot be related to the political ends of the State. This is a difficulty which the theocratic State does not encounter, since the theocratic State claims to serve ends which transcend earthly life. But the purely political State, which attempts to justify its total control of human life on rational grounds, cannot invoke the supernatural commands of the Deity as a means of preventing the development of autonomous rational values unrelated to political requirements.

The basic question, therefore, is whether or not there is in human beings a principle of rational autonomy which subsists on trans-political values and which needs only an increase in conscious self-realization to declare its independence of political ends. Is there, in short, a "genius" in

human beings which has no fulfillment in the workings of the political process as such, and is smothered out of existence—made to disappear or to "hide"—when men are subjected to total political control?

The reality of this "genius" does not necessarily appear in discussions of political systems, even when the discussion is about "freedom." The quality of the higher life of which men are capable is exhibited only when they *live that life,* pursuing *its ends.* Then we can see freedom as a by-product of the activities of free men, instead of as an abstract political design involving institutions intended to protect, but which can never cause, freedom.

Arguments about freedom which focus on the forms of institutions are arguments which tacitly declare that institutions make men and provide what freedom it is possible for them to have.

The only good institutions are institutions which are a kind of "track" left by free intelligence at work. When the motives for freedom decline in human life, then the institutions close in, celebrating their rise to power and authority with a lot of ceremonial declarations and hymns concerning the "values" they are preserving and securing for mankind. This is nonsense. It is the genius of individual human beings which creates all values.

The great variable in all social philosophy and all political theory is the idea of the self and of human potentiality held by human beings. When men have deprecating or incoherent ideas about themselves, the activity of the genius is reduced almost to a cipher, and then they *need* heavy-handed institutions to keep the society from collapsing into anarchic chaos. But when the idea of the self is rich in the qualities of greatness, the institutions are correspondingly reduced until they have no longer any sovereignty, but only practical utility.

REVIEW
A LITTLE LEAVENING

A VIEW OF THE NATION (Grove Press, 1960), an anthology of articles published in that great weekly between 1955-1959, is indeed a view of the national scene—a view from a journalistic observation post that for 95 years has been manned by distinguished crews of critical observers who have reported what they have seen with a perceptiveness that was more often right than popular. Seeing and reporting are two separate gifts, or skills, either one of which may either obstruct or enhance the other, and the *Nation*, through a policy that has a strong tradition of independence behind it, offers a post for observers who can use both skills as one and in their special fields offer insight as well. This is evident from the selections in this book, and the fact that the *Nation* has not only kept its view clear, but has also illuminated the objects and subjects it has sighted during the doom beshrouded fifties, speaks more than well for its editor, Carey McWilliams, who also provides a summation of the magazine's historic position.

For me, at least, to review this book would be a waste of the variety of impulses it jarred loose as I read it. An early staff member of the magazine said that it was intended to be "a leaven in the lump of American journalism." While I'm not exactly a lump of journalism, I do sometimes feel that I've become a lump by absorbing more than my share of the over-sauced objectivity that passes for reporting, as well as a soggy ration of the pundit pabulum of the commentators that passes for wisdom. The effect is like taking one of those bulking agents that are supposed to give you a well-fed feeling while you are doing without nourishment in order to lose weight. In short, I needed leaven and substance and the *Nation* anthology gave me both.

More than that, reading the *Nation* pieces worked like the sour dough Paul Bunyan's cook used to break up log jams—real American leavening. Each article broke up the autistic thinking I'd fallen into and gave me an impulse to enlarge and improvise upon each theme. That, of course, is the function of any journal of informed opinion; if it doesn't make us think beyond the text, it has failed.

A View of the Nation is divided into five sections: The American Writers; Popular Culture; The Range of Social Problems; War, Peace and the Military; and The Economics of Life. Because it came first, The American Writers section attracted me most, especially since two articles in it seemed to me to supply a lever with which to pry back the structure of what C. Wright Mills calls "crackpot realism," a thing that most of the other articles attack either directly or indirectly.

To really define "crackpot realism," one has to become almost totally and dispassionately alienated from our culture and its institutions and once again understand personal realism, human realism—the love, hunger, longing, hope, faith and fear that come from within, from beneath, and before the conditioning in economics, politics, peace by threat, status degradation, and prosperity by the deprivation of others. An intelligent innocence is needed, if that is possible, a place from which to view the "reality" of the involved—the people who act as if they have to do what they are doing. In your innocence, if you achieve the state I have described, you might judge them to be crackpot realists and be right.

That brings me, not really strangely, to the article, "The Neglected Henry Miller," by Kenneth Rexroth. Henry Miller, and I know him well, doesn't feel neglected and that isn't what Rexroth means by the title. What he means is that American readers have neglected to give themselves an enriching experience by avoiding the writings that have made Miller famous in other lands. Henry Miller, more than anyone alive and writing today, is the intelligent innocent I tried to describe in the previous paragraph—a creative innocent. Prince Myshkin, in Dostoievsky's *The Idiot*, became a living definition of innocence by

giving corruption such a contrast that it could at last be seen for what it was. This he did through his passivity. Henry Miller isn't passive, but being uninvolved with the culture, or society, that fosters corruption in the guise of moral and martial expediency, he can whoop up a carnival where the freaks turn out to be our sacred myths and the scholars and statesmen the shills. He isn't amoral, as it may seem when we first encounter him; the geeks and monsters we have nurtured simply aren't worthy of a moral judgment. He can't take on the posture of a savior, for to do so would mean involving himself in sins and guilts that would mutilate his innocence, cancel the freedom that has allowed us to see our civilization from the outside.

Rexroth senses this when he says, "They [the great writers] have used the forms of the Great Lie to expose the truth," adding that Henry Miller has created a form of his own. "Miller," he says, "has preserved an innocence in the practice of literature almost unique. Likewise he has preserved an innocence of heart." This seems a strange thing to say about a man whose works—at least the most serious body of them—have been banned from this country as being too pornographic for popular consumption, but it is true. He has come as close to desexing sex as a man can. He has attacked it with the same gusto he applied to the rest of our institutions and thus has become vulnerable to a censorship. From the point of view of the current form of the Big Lie, the so-called sexiness of his books is the least objectionable thing about them and probably the least important.

Luckily, more of Henry Miller's writing is becoming available in this country, both in hard and paperback editions. He should be read and will be read more and more. If we are at all involved in the Big Lie, or the "crackpot realism" of our times, he will at first anger us, for things that to us still seem sacred may to him appear as ridiculous. But stand back with him and look a little longer. Remember how difficult it sometimes is to answer a child's simple, "Why?" Look still again and ask yourself—why? Why, indeed, should an innocent who bears no man malice make anyone mad? Or why, if you have read *The Idiot*, should Prince Myshkin make you impatient? Perhaps only by moving to an uncomfortable innocence can we regain our souls. In *The Tropic of Capricorn* there was a place where it seemed likely that Henry Miller would become involved with our system and its "crackpot realism" and at that point he cried out in mortal terror, "I have to die as a city in order to live as a man." Do we have to ask ourselves what he meant? I don't think so.

As a perfect contrast to Kenneth Rexroth's illuminating article on Miller, there is an article by Maxwell Geismar, "The Age of Wouk." It is a study of Herman Wouk, the author of *The Caine Mutiny* and *Marjory Morningstar*—Wouk when he is really Wouking. It is also a study of *Life* Magazine's canonization of Wouk as the well rewarded apostle and eventual patron saint of "crackpot realism" and the Big Lie in its most compelling form—the righteous parable. If any writer is the opposite of Henry Miller, it is Wouk, and for this, I presume, he would consider himself doubly blessed. *Life's* view is that Wouk represents "the unquenchable reaching of man's soul for a truth higher than reality," and, of course, royalties running into six figures so that he will appreciate being a citizen of the most powerful nation on earth during "a decade of unparalleled prosperity." Geismar is pretty devastating in his evaluation of Wouk's real place in American letters.

Almost everyone has read *The Caine Mutiny* or seen the motion picture. Through the Wouking process, as I choose to call it, Captain Queeg, I think his name was, although a paranoid psychotic who endangered his ship and the lives of his crew, became in the end a sort of a Barry Goldwater of conservative naval tradition. If you'll recall, Queeg's first accuser, and the man who rightly prophesies the psychotic break to come, was an

officer—not Annapolis, who was also a writer and intellectual—someone Wouk's readers could readily identify as the dirtiest sort of malcontent and villain. (By this stroke Wouk, of course, at once placed himself above suspicion. He might be a writer, but he wasn't a dirty intellectual and when you came right down to it, he was as successful as any executive.) The point was then made that while the writing intellectual might be right in his diagnoses of Queeg's insanity, he bucked the responsibility for doing something about it on to a non-intellectual good guy. In the clutch, when Queeg really went to pieces during a storm, the good guy took over and thereby became a mutineer.

At a court martial, which is one of the most effective of its kind to appear in fiction, a Jewish officer who is also an attorney comes to the defense of the good guy. In effect, it is almost as if Wouk, who is a Jew himself, were saying, "Some of my best friends are Jews." Queeg cracks up at the trial and the good guy is cleared. Then, in the true climax of the tale, the attorney unmasks the real villain. You've guessed it. It is the writer-intellectual. The Navy and Queeg are absolved. The moral seems to be that it is better to go down, all flags flying, with a crazy captain than it is to be saved by the warnings of a slinking liberal intellectual who might expose a great institution. That some future Queeg might in a psychotic moment chuck Polaris missiles into Russia's front yard is beside the point. Millions who read the book and saw the picture, left it or the theatre with a lump in their throats. Wouk had given "crackpot realism" a sentimental verity that even shook up Henry Luce.

Somehow, I'd rather have Henry Miller make me uncomfortable. And I'm grateful to the *Nation* for reminding me that I have a choice. It has a certain innocence, too, and we can only hope that it always keeps it.

Los Angeles WALKER WINSLOW

COMMENTARY
SOURCES OF WHOLENESS

As an antidote, perhaps, to the critical tone concerning institutions so often found in these pages, we borrow from the Fall 1960 issue of *Landscape* some description of the traditional Navaho attitude toward the hogan—the house in which he lives. This feeling is a part of the religious culture which pervades so much of the life of the American Indians. The *Landscape* writer, Edwin N. Wilmsen, says:

> Each part of the hogan has its mythical counterpart and there are certain songs that, if sung while building the hogan, will assure long life and happiness to the house and its occupants. To a Navaho, his hogan is more than just a place to eat and sleep in, it has a very important position in his sacred world. The Holy People, the god-like prototypes of man, built the first hogans of turquoise, white shell, abalone and jet. Navaho mythology carefully and repetitiously describes the positions and movements of people and objects within the hogan and requires the doorway to be on the east in order to receive the first blessing of the rising sun. The hogan of First-Man was made of sheets of sunbeam and rainbow and a man considered his hogan beautiful to the extent that it was well-constructed and to the degree that it adhered to the original model. This point of view discouraged rapid and radical change in hogan construction and when changes did occur the round form and eastward orientation was retained. The Navaho's esteem for his house (and his womenfolk) is easily seen in the following short song from a House Blessing Way:
>
> It extends from the woman,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the rear corner of my hogan,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the center of my hogan,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the fireside of my hogan,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the side corners of my hogan
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the doorway of my hogan,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty extends from the surroundings of my hogan,
> It extends from the woman,
> Beauty radiates from its every direction,
> So it does.

This is the song of a people whose homes were described by a white man in 1855 as "temporary huts of the most miserable construction, . . . conical in shape, made of sticks covered with branches and dirt." The physical description was doubtless accurate enough, but what few Americans of that time could know was that—

> The Navaho . . . takes great care in choosing a site to build upon. The structures must not intrude upon the landscape of which they are a part, but must blend into other local elements in such a way as to be inconspicuous. On the other hand the site must not interfere with the rights of others, particularly in the use of water and pasture. Water is very valuable . . . and not always easy to come by; one would expect to find dwellings located immediately beside a source, but this is not the case. A family will locate instead "near water," which usually means within two or three miles of the source, so that their activities will not interfere with others when sheep are brought to drink. . . .

Institutions in the form of traditions of responsibility and duty, even to the landscape, nourish qualities that seem soon to die out in the rational society. How to get these qualities back for the good of modern man is a question that puzzled and tortured Leon Tolstoy, and many others since. What is wanted is a rational transcendentalism that will help modern man to a wholeness once obtained from tribal myths. How to be "rational," yet *whole*—that is the problem.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES IN PASSING

HARVARD psychologist Jerome S. Bruner, in *The Process of Education,* summarizes the experience of thirty-five leading scholars and educators who recently pooled their theories at a ten-day meeting called by the National Academy of Sciences. On the subject of when a child is "ready" for basic education, David Page, a mathematician of the University of Illinois, says: "As far as I am concerned, young children learn almost anything faster than adults do if it can be given to them in terms they understand." *(Time,* Sept. 26.) Bärbel Inhelder, a psychologist, believes that the very first two years of school might be devoted to a kind of "pre-curriculum" which encourages discovery of basic principles by the child, leading to better comprehension of formal science and math later on. *Time* continues:

> Psychologist Bruner suggests that literature may be taught the same way. Given the first part of a story, a child could be trained to complete it as a tragedy or a farce long before he understood those words. A young child should be introduced early to great human themes. "A curriculum ought to be built around the great issues, principles and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members."
>
> One obstacle to such learning, says Bruner, is the lack of intuitive thinking in U.S. schools. "The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion—these are the most valuable coin of the thinker at work." Yet in most schools, "guessing is heavily penalized and is associated somehow with laziness." The trend is to analysis—and not necessarily the thinking kind.

This book is evidence of what happens when leading minds turn their attention to the basic educational needs of the very young.

* * *

An article in the *Christian Century* (Sept. 14), "Protestant Church and College Student," by Warren Ashly, reports on the replies of some senior students who were asked to tell a group of clergymen and professors what had happened to their beliefs and attitudes during college years:

> One young man, due to graduate the next month as valedictorian of his university class, described how he had moved from the faith gained in the small-town church in which he grew up to the searching questions he now faced as a senior. He knew he could not go home spiritually, and he had words of criticism for a church whose lack of flexibility and intellectual grasp made such return an impossibility. Members of the college community who heard this spiritual autobiography agreed that the student had described eloquently the inner travels and travails of many of his fellows. Not so the clergymen present. One, prominent in the student's own denomination, complimented him for his analysis, then commented privately to one of the professors: "He's terribly confused, isn't he? But he will grow out of it."
>
> Such an attitude is not universal among Protestant clergymen, of course; in any indictment care must be taken to exclude those all too few ministers who have established rapport with today's students. But, looked at from a perspective within the college community, the dominant tendency of the local Protestant leadership seems to be refusal to take seriously the doubts, the questions, the rejections of mature students. Such refusal makes it impossible for the church to respond to the spiritual needs of those students.
>
> The clergymen are not entirely to blame, for their attitude has doubtless been conditioned by the ideas that have prevailed about college students through the past decade: that they are the "silent" generation, the seekers for security and contentment, the conformists. It is not so frequently noted that what really matters is what lies beneath the silence, behind the façade of conformity, beyond the search for security and contentment. There is where the genuine revolutions, the real transformations are occurring in the lives of many; there, in the inner life of many a student, is the serious search for meaning. It is, most often, a silent striving, undetected by professors who purvey facts and draw conclusions, unobserved even by fellow-students.
>
> This inner searching must certainly be unknown to the students' hometown ministers, who see them only casually during vacations. How else is one to explain certain conversations with students after their visits home? One such student involved in intellectual questioning, honestly viewed herself as an

> atheist; and it was with amusement mixed with something of horror that she reported that on her visit home she had been asked by her minister to preach a College Day sermon.

According to a survey reported in Gordon Allport's *The Individual and his Religion,* an estimated 60 per cent of American college youths who come of religious backgrounds "consider their own religion inadequate." On the occasion of the survey only 25 per cent were satisfied with their inherited orthodoxy. Apart from the impact of science in general and psychology in particular, one of the discoveries which college youths are apt to make is that "good ethics" are not necessarily dependent upon articles of religious faith. On this subject Dr. Allport writes:

> The relationship between personal religion and morality is admittedly complex. One study of contemporary college youth brings to light a striking degree of independence between the two. Many students outstanding for their sense of decency and consideration for others report that they feel no need of religion in their lives. At the same time, some say that their standards of conduct, unsupported by their theological beliefs, would collapse. But on the whole, in dealing with individual cases, one is more impressed by the apparent separation of moral standards from religion than by their dependence upon it.

Interest in religion at the university level might be said to have increased rather than decreased during the past ten years, but the interest manifests mostly as a search for the *meaning* of religious symbolism and aspiration. Dr. Allport says:

> Ever so many people at the present time find themselves interested in both psychology and religion. Psychology is a solidly growing science: there is hope that it may emerge as the decisive science of the twentieth century. It is also currently fashionable—perhaps too much so for its own good. While popular interest in psychology mounts, religion remains as ever one of the prominent concerns of mankind. This concern has existed since the dawn of history—probably long before—and has not been diminished by the social and moral catastrophes of the past three decades. Those who are interested in both psychological science and religion are quite naturally asking what the two subjects have to do with each other.

Comparative study of the major world religions is a rich field, and non-sectarian explorations are increasingly appreciated. Meanwhile, the decline of orthodoxy in both religion and psychology is a trend of the times, nowhere more clearly indicated than at the university.

FRONTIERS

Psychopathology and National Defense

JEROME FRANK'S profoundly disturbing analysis in his papers titled "Sanity and Survival" and "Breaking the Thought Barrier" is supplemented by evidence from a wide variety of sources. As MANAS readers will recall, Dr. Frank pretty well establishes, in clinical terms, that the policies which lead nations to war or its brink grow out of neurotic and psychotic states of mind. When a psychosis becomes collective, the work of counter-education is tremendously complicated and must be prolonged, but there are indications of some awakening perceptions of a view that should prove impervious to the bargaining tactics of power politics.

Brian Inglis writes in the September *Encounter* on "The Psychopath," and while what he says is in no sense involved directly with the problems of war or of national defense, its pertinence is inescapable. The fundamental characteristic of the psychopath in a social setting, as Inglis puts it, is that he "cannot as a rule co-operate with other like psychopaths, because he cannot trust them." As Dr. Frank has shown, distrust of a potential enemy produces an atmosphere which elicits the very form of behavior we suspect—something just as true of tribal nations as of incompatible husbands and wives. The psychopath, of course, is supremely provincial. "The symptom of psychopathy," writes Inglis, "which most of us find hardest to understand" is that we ourselves, when instinctively preferring a specific social or moral code, "tend blindly to assume that everyone else ought to feel it too." We have erected a "thought barrier," and whenever this happens the effects flow outward in every direction, as they do from every pebble thrown in a pool, eventually returning from its confines to wash over the point of origin.

National defense measures are in large part the result of a spreading psychopathy, and on this aspect of the subject Mr. Inglis is convincing:

> Individuals who are not in themselves psychopathic become so under the influence of others who are. We are all aware that we have some impulses in ourselves of which we should be ashamed, and of which in normal circumstances we *are* ashamed. But if a leader can give us the excuse not to feel ashamed about them, we may unleash them in ourselves and condone them in others. Hitler with anti-Semitism, Titus Oates with "No Popery," McCarthy with witch-hunting, helped to make otherwise respectable citizens psychopathic; and the symptoms can become extremely ugly, when torture or lynching are condoned. It is a process of which the early stages can be seen in every close-knit group, school, political party, or club; members of the group will do things corporately that they would never consider doing as individuals. All of us have been present on occasions when we have been deterred from protesting at, and even revelled in, destruction or din because we are in the party, though we know that if we happened to be the landlord or a neighbour we would be tempted to send for the police. The disintegration of a community's standards when psychopathy manages to enlist the support of corporate loyalty has often been observed in Fascist and Communist countries, it has been portrayed on the stage in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible,* and in fiction in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies.* It can be seen, too, in the sport which came to be known in America as "The Chicken Game," a twisted version of follow-my-leader which led members of teenage gangs to compete with each other in dangerous acts—"who can stay longest on the tracks before getting out of the way of the express?"

A review article, "No Hatred and No Flag," by Michael Hamburger, in the October *Encounter*, dealing with a German volume of war poems, again conveys the realization that creative writers are apt to see a hundred years beyond the diplomats and politicians. "Paradoxically," Hamburger writes, "modern war-poetry has become almost synonymous with anti-war poetry." The same may be said of many war novels. What the poets and novelists sense is that the war situation is itself the manifestation of a collectively disordered psyche. Hamburger quotes from *War Poems of the Twentieth Century* lines by the German poet Bert Brecht:

> When men march off to war they do not know
> That their enemy is marching at their head
> The voice which gives them orders
> Is the voice of the enemy.
> He who speaks of enemies
> Himself is the enemy.

On the theme of Hamburger's title, "No Hatred and No Flag," there are these verses from F. S. Flint's *Lament:*

The young men of the world
Are condemned to death.
They have been called up to die
For the crime of their fathers.

The young men of the world
No longer possess the road:
The road possesses them.
They no longer inherit the earth:
The earth inherits them.

They are no longer the masters of fire:
Fire is their master:
They serve him, he destroys them.

Thus the psychiatrists and the poets, and now, not so surprisingly, we hear from Mr. Steve Allen. A section from his new book, *Mark It and Strike It*, printed in the *Saturday Review* for Aug. 20, has something to say about resistance to the nationalist psychopathy which swirls around us all. For one thing, we must not participate in the "tragic folly" of opposing steps toward human betterment on the ground that they are or have been sponsored by the Communists. Mr. Allen writes:

> We must remember that we can harm the Communist cause if we tell the *truth* about it. We help it if we lie about it and our lie is found out. And to tell the truth about Communism we must learn more about it, both the good and the bad. Yes, I say *good;* the reader who is shocked by this use of the word demonstrates his own ignorance. It is a fact that the Communist world desires certain things that the West desires, for that reason alone we should be prepared to admit that our two camps may not be painted in simple black and white. There is black, to be sure, on the Communist side; Hoover, as someone has said, may have permitted men to starve (through inaction) but Stalin deliberately starved them. His sins were so heinous that they are now admitted even by the Russians. But if we think of all Communists as evil fiends we render ourselves weak, ignorant, and unrealistic. In this nation we have adopted a number of socialistic doctrines and practices that forty years ago were considered as Red as the devil himself.

To understand the problems of "the enemy" is to become, in a measure, his friend. It may be that we shall have to oppose him with every element of strength at our disposal, but if we can do it without believing that he is unalterably devoted to evil, we are still his friends. There are many ways of working for this kind of enlightenment. For example, in Ralph de Toledano's *Lament for a Generation*, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Victorian poet and Catholic priest, is quoted as saying:

> I must tell you that I am always thinking of the Communist future. . . . Horrible to say, in a manner I am a Communist. Their ideal barring some things is nobler than that professed by any secular statesman I know of. . . Besides it is just. I do not mean the means of getting it are. But it is a dreadful thing for the greatest and most necessary part of a very rich nation to live a hard life without dignity, knowledge, comfort, delight, or hopes in the midst of plenty—which plenty they make. They profess that they do not care what they wreck and burn, the old civilization and order must be destroyed. This is a dreadful look-out, but what has the old civilization done for them?

Mr. Allen concludes:

> One of the facts we must understand is that the convinced Communist has an almost religious vision of world improvement; he feels himself in virtuous terms and it provokes his fury when we tell him he is evil. It is lamentable that Christians, who centuries ago ought to have done by peaceful means the work that the Communists are currently effecting so ruthlessly, will deny that a good end is desirable if they find out that the Communists also wish it. Many Christians have a fair idea of their commitments to their God, but a very weak idea indeed of their commitment to their fellow man (if indeed the latter does not rule out the former). Isolationists shouting today, for example (and it is embarrassing to note that they are almost always Christians), that our incomes ought not be taxed to help either our own poor or people in other countries are playing right into the hands of Communists whose siren song is very attractive indeed to the starving and destitute.

For our own conclusion, we choose two verses from the *Dhammapada*, in which the Buddha speaks as a timeless psychologist:

> "He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me," who express such thoughts tie their mind with the intention of retaliation. In them hatred will not cease.
>
> "He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me," who do not express such thoughts, in them hatred will cease.