

## BLURRED IMAGES OF MAN

HARDLY a human being goes through life without at some time feeling that he has in him a special quality or essence which sets him off from everyone else. This sense of uniqueness is often disposed of by the sophisticated as being a kind of fantasizing egotism indulged in by adolescents. You meet it in people who, without any particular craft, have written a story or a poem, and are persuaded that this work will now expose their hidden genius. It appears, again, in those who have discovered the magic of metaphysical formulas and, unaware that the art of abstraction and generalization has been an intellectual plaything for thousands of years, go about pleading with an indifferent world to admit that at last the essential structures and processes of existence have been defined. Actually, the forms of this naïve valuation of self-expression are endless. They begin in childhood, with the child's spontaneous joy in whatever he does or makes—running to a parent with each new drawing, or the boat he has made out of a broken board—and last until the sense of self is either raised to a higher level of consciousness, or blighted into self-contempt by an unplanned concert of derision.

It is a cruel thing to lead a person into self-contempt. We try not to do it to children. With a kind pretense—and for the wise, it is no pretense—we share the child's excitement at his new creation. But with adults we show less patience. They must, we say, "grow up." They must face the facts of life. If they want eminence, we tell them, they will have to learn the disciplines which bring success. You would think, from the way people talk, that they *knew* the facts of life and could give a just account of the meaning of success. You would think that the child's image of what is fresh, good, and of value, has been properly refined and perfected by the members of the adult world, and that here no confusion exists

concerning what to admire, what to long for, and what to work at.

This is of course untrue. We do not know these things. The adult image of man and his works is blurred, not clear. The adult sense of self is filled with misgivings and ambivalence. The institutional shadows of all this uncertainty darken every human decision and direct harassing questions to the individual who wonders about the meaning of his identity. The primary sense of creative capacity, of being able to *do* things, *see* things, to find delight and wonder in the world around us, is stripped down to the tender vulnerability that is so agonizingly familiar to all human beings. For many men, what was an impulse to be and to do turns into a longing for refuge, even a hope of somehow getting lost in the crowd. Multiplied by the coefficient of mass populations, this sad transformation becomes a factitious version of the human type, and with the authoritative help of statisticians, social historians, and other experts for whom the collective fact is the only reality, is eventually established as the authentic portrait of man.

It is at this point that we begin to listen for, to hear, and to identify the lonely voices. For reasons we do not understand, a tiny proportion of the human race refuses to acknowledge the blurred, homogenized image placed before us in any way related to the true spirit of man. Here and there we find men and women in whom the Promethean urge continues to find expression. For them, the child's wonder and feeling of discovery have never died out. They do not speak to tabular diagrams or to normative averages, but to men. For them, the spark of original consciousness which is felt by every child—that sense of acting for the first time, of creating, loving, of treasuring and enjoying, as no one in the world has ever done before—is the touch and

breath of reality, of man's share in divinity. It is not false—this feeling of being one's self and no other; it is only the child's awareness of self, and this awareness ought to grow with the man, into the maturity which adds measure and fitness to the original fire.

If we knew what a human being is—if we had some larger scheme of meaning in which to place the primary intuitions of self-consciousness—we would not feel so lost or uncertain. If we could somehow acquire a sense of history for consciousness, and a sense of destiny for self, we might be able to read the story of human evolution in other terms than the biological record of organic development. Perhaps, in time, we shall be able to erect the structure of regenerated convictions of the dignity of man upon immovable foundations of self-experience, but meanwhile we have a holding action to undertake, while we are armed with nothing more than the whisperings of our inner being and can speak with only the breaking voices of our half-grown child hearts.

There is a place in our lives for logic and the scientific method, but not in order to denude the human being of his dreams and longings. The reality we begin with must be the reality we *feel*. The logic to be fulfilled is the logic of the initial expressions of the heart and mind, not the demeaning conclusions taken from the long record of human inadequacy and failure.

Do you suppose that if men began to act upon their best feelings, instead of submitting to what they are told is "practical," or "necessary for their survival," that they would be stripped of their material things and made to go hungry and homeless? Do you really believe that the essential decencies are punished and that only the path of studied compromise will shield ourselves and coming generations from the evil that is in the world?

A man wondering about these questions may look around and get discouraged. What can he do? Eventually, as he waits, the circumstances grow more confining and the questions change

into a single query: What must he not do? That is already the moral issue before the world, today. We keep asking and arguing about what we must not do. As collectivists, perhaps, we are no longer permitted any other sort of question. The hour is late and we have past-due obligations to fulfill which leave us little choice. But we are not only units in the mass. As individuals we have a separate as well as a collective destiny. It is true enough that the sum of individual destinies creates the collective destiny, but it is also true that the distinguished individual contributes a thousand times his share to the collective destiny. If the collective destiny reflects a vision, the vision comes from individuals. If the longings of the mass of men have any meaning at all, it is a meaning to be fulfilled by individuals and striven for by individuals. And just the striving has in itself all the essences that will finally flower forth in the general realization. "I never knew," said Robert Frost, "how many disadvantages anyone needed to get anywhere in the world." The collective good or destiny is the sum of what is made by individuals who surmount disadvantages, so that there is a qualitative as well as a quantitative difference between individual and collective destiny. Years ago, Herbert Croly wrote in the *New Republic* about Abraham Lincoln:

It was his insight which enabled him to keep alive during the Civil War the spirit of just and merciful dealing and the hope of love and charity on earth. He knew that without justice and merciful dealing human nature could not be redeemed in this or any other world, and because he knew this the goblins of war could not lead him astray. Both the integrity and the magnanimity of his life were born of this humane knowledge. Others willed when he did not and much their willing did. But he *knew* when others did not know and he knew the value of knowledge. In a neglected passage of one of his last speeches he recommends to his fellow-countrymen the study of the "incidents" of the Civil War "as philosophy to learn wisdom from and none of them as wrongs to be revenged." That sentence furnishes the key to the interpretation of Abraham Lincoln. He studied the incidents of his own life, of the lives of other people and the life of his country not as an

excuse for revenge or for any kind of moral pugnacity or compensation, but as a philosophy to learn wisdom from.

A man walks around in this world of things breaking up, things getting started, of a few lonely truths and a lot of noisy lies, and he wonders who he is and what he can do. Some men can do more than others, but all men can make a place in their lives for what they would like the right to believe in, and then believe in it. There is nothing under heaven to stop a man from doing what he believes in, some of the time. And why should he expect more? Perhaps what he believes in is wrong or needs correction. To do what you believe in is difficult, and it may be wrong, but not to work at it at all is never to find out.

Life is a war with recalcitrant materials. The vision the individual has of himself is not false; it is only misleading as to the nature of the materials he has to work with. The materials are tougher than we suspect, and we have not only to master the materials, but also to learn that no form of material has the stuff of final achievement. We work at life, it seems, with some kind of bifocal vision. The image of a high dream is always in danger of becoming the captive of a less than ideal level of consciousness. And then, because too much is expected of the dream at that level, it calls up its opposite and we, in turn, become the captive of *that*. The child, filled with the capacity to shape and create, rushes about making things. His houses don't stand, the bridges wash away, and the boats don't sail very well. His horses don't look like horses and the arms of his people don't grow out of their bodies. Now comes a test—the test of whether he can go on *feeling* the idea of building houses and bridges and drawing pictures, until he masters the materials and begins to keep the feeling alive in another way. So with loving, honoring, and cherishing: the task is to find the right materials in which to give these high human motives embodiment, instead of suffering betrayal. The project of man is to place meaning on record, even though the monuments will not last forever. The materials always crumble at last. The

collective destiny is finally resolved in the dust of history, but the human intention of seeking and recording meaning is continuous and eternal.

The secret longings of people are their most precious possession. What would we be without them? Like the craftsman developing new forms, we have to relate the longings with the right materials. We have to find the appropriate vocabulary to embody our ideas, and when we use a mortal form we have to expect and be reconciled to the death of that form.

These are days of strange awakening to the stuff and meaning of our lives. It may be a fortunate historical accident that the half-seer and half-child perception of the youth of this age coincides with the ripening of an immeasurable dread of the consequences of old ways. The young want to break with the past at a time when the past threatens to crack into yawning chasms of destruction all about us. The present has the flavor of *Götterdämmerung* disaster, and there is no gainsaying that the horror coming from old dreams and misbegotten images of man and his welfare exists. These are three-dimensional shadows of partisan loves and strivings, made according to the specifications of the opposite of what the people longed for. We built our dreams of the wrong materials; we claimed a promise of the good life in the fallible arrangements of politics and economics. Not rationally but intuitively, the young seem to know better. They will no doubt make shadows of their own, but a man can be wrong without anger and suffer less for his mistakes.

A time of new beginnings is a time to prize. At the time of beginnings, matter is pliable, responsive, young. Beginnings have all the defects and vulnerabilities of childhood, but they also have its fresh vision and its sense of human capacity. In the beginning, people make new images of man.

## *Letter from* ENGLAND

STAPLECROSS, SUSSEX.—The spectacle of an aged Bertrand Russell sitting cross-legged on the pavement outside the London Ministry of Defence in protest, along with many leading intellectuals, against the present Government's policy of nuclear weapons development, aroused in my mind two images. The first was that of the Mahatma, small, shrivelled, almost toothless, performing the same passive protest against the British Raj in India. The other was that of an occasion when I had the honour of spending an evening with Bertrand Russell. Russell had greatly influenced me at a period of my life when I was facing the problems of bringing up a large family. I adopted his theories of child management and I found them practical—and simple, too. "Only strike a child in anger," counselled Russell. "It will instinctively understand the act and will not harbour resentment. But never strike a child in cold blood."

Knowing how much I admired Russell, a lady, formerly his secretary, invited me to dinner to meet him. I was, of course, shy when introduced to the small, slight man with the hatchet features and great shock of white hair. Alas, our hostess had invited another guest—the present Sir\_\_\_\_, then plain Mr.\_\_\_\_. Throughout the meal, and right through the evening that followed, Mr.\_\_\_\_, as he then was, *talked* and TALKED. Every now and then, as he stopped to get his breath, he fixed his eye on a now pipesmoking Russell and interjected, like an accusation: "Mind you! I speak from the *Christian* standpoint!" Russell merely sucked on his pipe and made no answer. A sceptic, as his fellow guest well knew, he displayed what was for me a memorable example of what it really is to be one of nature's aristocrats. Yet the performance to which we were treated on that occasion was one to infuriate the most long-suffering of men. Was this the manic phase of a manic depressive? I think it must have been. During the course of that dinner I ventured on a single observation, namely, that force never achieved any end. Russell, a life-long pacifist, replied—and replied with a string of historical examples of how force has achieved its purposes. This did not, of course, in any way invalidate his general philosophy of passive resistance, the final noble example of which he gave to England,

and, one would hope, the whole civilized world, last month. A noble figure, surely. How, then, did the press react to this silent protest and preparedness to suffer imprisonment for a great idea, and treat the business?

The protest was played down by such newspapers as I saw, the accounts hovering between a desire to affect vague contempt for these "crackpots" and the sort of discomfort that ensues upon taking the wrong side of a moral issue. In any view, this type of protest will, during the months ahead—and the years, maybe, should humanity be spared an idiot racial *hara-kiri*—draw more and more people to silent mass protest. What, for the moment, is forgotten by those who direct our policies is that, in the final analysis, passive resistance may, by the employment of a transcendent power, prove stronger than all the H-bombs put together. Yet no London paper I saw referred to the close parallel between the silent protest led by the aged philosopher and that of the late Mahatma Gandhi. A curious omission, surely.

When this protest was presented by TV I found that an old friend of mine, Macdonald Hastings, was assigned the job of asking the squatters what they were doing and what they hoped to achieve, and for a moment my heart sank, and I thought: "They are going to put the merciless cameras upon the aged, shrivelled man who leads these men and women of the present generation." But they did not. Moreover, it was apparent that, however sharply the TV questioner probed, he could not conceal—for such is the TV's analytic eye—that he himself felt that in this protest was something ethically high above political stunting, and whatever his views, he closed on a note of respect for those whom he had interrogated. In my view, this method, both here and in Scotland, will grow in the months ahead. I have yet to meet a single individual who favoured the manufacture of H-bombs here, though, too often, people, assuming that the Press reflects the general view, shrink from proclaiming an imagined unpopular cause.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

## REVIEW

### NOTES ON THE TEXAS QUARTERLY

SEVERAL articles in two recent issues of this attractive journal—Summer and Autumn issues of 1960—give clear expression of themes regularly recurring in MANAS, and with a professional competence which amateurs of the same persuasion—such as your reviewer—find most impressive. The "field" is that of philosophy, tilted toward both everyday-for-everyone significance and international evaluations. This field, in the view of Harry Ransom, editor of the *Texas Quarterly*, belongs to us all.

The articles we have in mind are Paul Schilpp's "The Abdication of Philosophy" and Michael Polanyi's "The Study of Man" (Summer); and Harold Urey's "Science and Society" and Robert Hartman's "Sputnik's Moral Challenge" (Autumn). After thirty-six years of teaching philosophy in various universities, Prof. Schilpp finds himself gravitating more and more to what is sometimes called an "activist" approach. He feels that a serious philosopher "must be willing to undertake the *application* of value judgments to the actual—and more particularly to the crucial—problems which face mankind today: in economics, in politics, in race relations and in international relations." Prof. Schilpp continues:

True enough, the philosopher may not have the answers. Is this a good reason for not pointing out directions and possible consequences to result from different courses of action?

Most philosophers seem to shrink back from being propagandists as from the plague. This attitude seems to me to be nothing short of hypocritical. It is difficult for me to think of any more effective philosophical propaganda than that waged for years now by the logical empiricists and Oxford analysts—for their point of view and methods! If it is legitimate for philosophers to be propagandists for grammar, linguistics, and analysis, why is it so bad to engage in propaganda for saving the human race from destroying itself? Is it bad philosophy to urge men to use their native intelligence in place of nationalistic passions?

It is not a matter of advocating the particular solutions preferred by this, that, or the other philosopher. But it is a matter of getting men to *think* about the transcendently urgent human problems, and to get them to think comprehensively reflectively, critically. It is not acceptance I am advocating, but the aid of philosophic thinking to help men to achieve their own reasonable and rational solutions.

In short, if one of the most important tasks of today lies in getting men to "think instead of merely reacting," philosophers should be, at the least, provocative and challenging, and at the most, dedicated.

Michael Polanyi's "Study of Man" is also concerned with securing recognition of the fact that many of our present problems—both personal and international—are due to the habit of regarding observation as more important than evaluation. Yet we should be reminded that every important scientific advance has been preceded by some vision which observation of itself could never supply (see Arthur Koestler's *The Sleepwalkers*). Nor is "intuition," the "sense of wholeness," "vision," or whatever other term we care to employ, readily distinguishable from art and other responses to beauty. A new and more human science must, as Mr. Polanyi says, make up for this lost cognizance:

A continuous transition from observation to valuation can actually be carried out within science itself, and indeed within the exact sciences, simply by moving from physics to applied mathematics and then further to pure mathematics. Even physics, though based on observation, relies heavily on a sense of intellectual beauty. No one who is unresponsive to such beauty can hope to make an important discovery in mathematical physics, or even to gain a proper understanding of its existing theories.

Robert Hartman in "Sputnik's Moral Challenge" suggests historical perspective upon the empty spaces in so much "scientific" thinking:

Man, the rational animal, values his thinking as the highest of all values. The Aristotelian God was occupied with thinking, and with thinking about his thinking, and man's highest occupation was regarded to be thinking about the divine thinker thinking his thinking—*theoria*, the Aristotelian term, literally

means "seeing God." If, however, you value thinking most highly, and there is a flaw in your thinking, then you value most highly something which is faulty, and all your valuation, *all your history*, goes wrong. It so happens that a fatal flaw has existed, and exists to this day, in man's thinking. He has not been able, to this day, to think validly about the most important thing there is, the life of the individual human person. Thus he has not been able to value it validly, that is as part of his inner being, of his very human rationality, as supreme object and goal of his history. The reason, as are the reasons for so many stupidities in human history, is one of the fallacies committed by Aristotle, and repeated, as have been so many of his half-truths, by innumerable generations of philosophers; it is the fallacy, namely, that since reason works by abstraction and generalization, the unique—which by definition is neither abstract nor general—cannot be grasped by reason. The superficial plausibility of this argument has kept it a philosophical dogma to this day—for what could *unique* things possibly have in *common*?

Prof. Hartman continues:

This naive logical fallacy has held back the development of human ethics in the same way in which similar, no less naïve ones in earlier times have held back human science. There is no little truth in Russell's and others' judgment that Aristotle was one of the great calamities to befall the human race. Due to this Aristotelian fallacy, the individual human life has never had a respectable intellectual standing in human thought. The paradox of man's intellectual history is—and the more one understands it the more incredible it becomes, just as the mystery encountered by the Select Exploratory Mission—that *man has valued his faulty thinking higher than his own life*. Our lore is full of exhortations and examples of men laying down their lives for the sake of some ideas; but none—except in the Gospel and in existentialist literature—of men laying down their prejudices for the sake of life. Rationalizations, systems, ideas have ruled supremely in history, and human beings have fallen their victims. If we examine history we find that all really great crimes, all the collective and individual slaughters committed legally by civilized men and nations, have been committed in the name of some abstraction—some concept of "nation," "God," "race," and now, of all things, "economic systems." And always there has risen the protest in the name of the individual. As Castellio said when Calvin burned Servetus: "Burning a man is not the defense of faith but the

murder of a man," so we can—and must—say today: "Burning men, women, and children by atomic bombs is not the defense of the nation but the murder of men, women, and children." The Bible says it in the old, seldom-understood words: "Overcome evil by good"—and not by additional evil.

Harold Urey, writing on "Science and Society," feels that it is necessary to admit that most scientists are skeptics—that is, they do not subscribe to the doctrines of Christianity, Judaism or any other religion. Their ethics are quite often exemplary, however, by traditional religious standards, which suggests only that they cannot subscribe to one *specific* religion. But neither does science enlarge their ethical perspective: the individual scientist, just as the individual human being, psychologically considered, must accomplish this through his own "trans-observational" thinking. Why? Because "science never imposes a condition represented by the word *ought*." Dr. Urey continues:

Science gives us no purpose in living beyond having a pleasant existence in one way or another. Scientists themselves are inspired by the magnificent things which they study. But science does not provide the ordinary man whose daily life is often drab and anything but sublime with any objective that gives him a feeling of dignity. Such a feeling is essential if he is to rise above the disappointments and temptations of life and if he is to do the best of which he is capable. One of the pressing needs of this age is a great prophet who can accept the facts of science and at the same time can give inspiration to fill this great void. I do not believe that current evangelists so popular from time to time have made any contribution to the solving of this fundamental problem.

At the conclusion of his article Prof. Hartman dares to suggest that when science becomes consciously metaphysical in one aspect of its domain, it will be possible to teach "laws" that underlie the problems of "value feeling":

These laws will be nothing unless they are universal, absolute, valid for any rational being whatsoever, whether man, woman, or child, whether European, American, or Asian, whether on this planet or some other planet of the universe. Wherever there are rational beings these laws must be

valid. At present we have such universal laws in natural science.

"Nothing is more impressive," writes Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World*, "than the fact that as mathematics withdrew increasingly into the upper regions of ever greater extremes of abstract thought, it recurred back to earth with a corresponding importance for the analysis of concrete facts." In other words, the very essence of the concrete lies in the most abstract. So it is with value. Its very essence lies in the most abstract thought, that is, in the symbols of axiology; and you never reach the essence of value by dabbling in the concreteness of value phenomena. The third reason for the objection that value knowledge destroys the value experience is the common confusion of feeling with valuation. Valuation is no more nor less a matter of feeling than is, say, music. It is a matter of feeling *structured by laws*—feeling following definite laws. The laws of music are those of the theory of harmony, the laws of value are those of value theory. The feeling of value is nothing arbitrary. To quote the great German axiologist, Nicolai Hartmann, "the feeling of value is not free; once it has grasped the meaning of value it cannot feel differently. It cannot regard good faith as wicked, or cheating and deceit as honorable. It can be value-blind, but that is an entirely different matter; in this case it is not responsive to values at all and does not comprehend them"—like a person who is not musical or is color blind.

No doubt all these things have been said before. But what we detect, or think we detect, in the foregoing is that discussion of such themes is becoming a dominant current in modern thought, with an articulateness that is part of a new language. The seasoning of the *Texas Quarterly* with contributions of this sort deserves particular appreciation. It is also pleasant to encounter them in a quarterly with such a readable format.

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## *COMMENTARY*

### THE MORALLY EARNEST ATHEISTS

IT is years since we read Stefan Zweig's *The Right to Heresy*, a book about the long struggle between Michael Servetus and John Calvin which ended with Calvin burning Servetus at the stake for what Calvin considered to be Servetus' theological errors. Undoubtedly the statement of Sebastien Castellio, quoted in Review—"Burning a man is not the defense of faith but the murder of a man"—occurs in Zweig's book, yet not to remember it is cause for chagrin. Utterances of this sort should be unforgettable. They contain whole volumes of history as well as essential moral verity.

They explain why Lamettrie, the pioneer atheist of the eighteenth century, felt so strongly when he wrote:

If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would be no soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices, men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the pleasant path to virtue.

Lamettrie is obviously a moralist, but by his period of history "defense of faith" had become an excuse for so many crimes that the traditional source of moral inspiration was for him a well of "consecrated poison." Lamettrie, you may say, oversimplifies the problems of human behavior; just following our impulses is surely not the panacea for human ills; yet there may be more truth in even such oversimplifications than in the "religious" attitudes which could approve the burning to death of a human being for his opinions. We cannot excuse this cruel murder by calling Calvin an unnatural monster, but must admit, with Coleridge, that the death of Servetus was not "Calvin's guilt especially, but the common opprobrium of all European Christendom." Even

"gentle Melanchthon," Luther's friend and mentor, approved the sentence of Servetus as just.

So it is not remarkable at all that, as late as the middle years of the twentieth century, men with long memories and a knowledge of history object to any sort of "spiritual" doctrine? and remain unresponsive to the idea of "transcendental influences." They recall what men have done to other men in the name of some teachings or assertion said to come from "on high."

And yet Servetus, Calvin's unhappy victim, was himself an advocate of pantheistic doctrines. In his argument with Calvin, he reproached the Genevan reformer:

All that men do, you say is done in sin, and is mixed with dregs that stink before God, and merit nothing but eternal death. But therein you blaspheme. Stripping us of all possible goodness, you do violence to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, who ascribe perfection or the power of being perfect to us. . . . You scout this celestial perfection, because you have never tested perfection of the kind yourself.

It seems a pity to let the Calvins of history shape our minds by reaction. Why not consider independently and by contrast the "spiritual ideas" of men like Servetus? *His* ideas, at any rate, were not the historic cause and provocation of modern atheism. This small honor to the martyred heretics of Western history might lead to better things than can come from a determined rejection of all transcendental inspiration.



## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### LAUGHTER BETWEEN TEARS

WE wonder how many middle-aged parents, like ourselves, have paused to ponder the difference in mood between Booth Tarkington's *Seventeen* and such contemporary interpretations of the adolescent psyche as may be presently found in the works of J. D. Salinger. And whatever the novel about teen-agers now, all authors seem to be in agreement that neither existence nor thought among the young can possibly be simple or uncomplicated. Today's teenagers, it is fair to say, have considerably less "fun" than their parents or grandparents had at the same age of irresponsibility. They are young-old, more precocious in every respect, and case-hardened by knowledge of the unsettled lives around them. Of course, they are at the same time less reliable in respect to school or other responsibilities. But they Dig. Now the way we look at it is this: Old people need sympathy, middle-aged people need sympathy, children need sympathy, and the adolescent needs something more, something which is very hard to give, and that is patience.

A current first novel by Richard Fisher, called *The Very First Time* (Dell, 1959), would have been regarded as a "shocking" book thirty years ago, but, more important, it would not have been written thirty years ago. This is a story of the wanderings and maneuverings of two fairly privileged fifteen-year-olds, one of whom lives with his father and stepmother, and who is obsessed by thoughts concerning a "true" mother about whom so many conflicting stories have been told. The point is that Robert is obsessed in a conscious, semi-psychoanalytic way. He verbalizes wryly and at times seems a thousand years old. A "basic" problem worries itself even deeper, as problems may when the symbols used in the art of psychic introspection become faddish. Robert is not even sure that his "true" father is his *true* father, as he reveals to his closest friend:

"Listen, I've known this a long time. I've got a true mother and a false mother, a true father and a false father, but I think my true father isn't my true father even. He's a false true-father!"

Despite the father's refusal to underwrite the trip to New York and Mother, and in the face of further estrangement between father and son, Robert hitch-hikes to New York. When he returns he sorts out the results of the journey to the same friend:

"Mother said there was a tremendous battle over me when I was four or five years old."

"In court?"

"Yes. So she says because of him she isn't a big star. She was only mixed up with him for three years, but she blames him. Also me. Because inches were thrown around the waist as I was born and many jobs were lost when she was young, I bet."

"Maybe he is your father after all."

"It doesn't matter. Because all this about their married life got me to thinking that my admiration for Ann was like my father beating my mother endlessly as he was hated. And I knew I was like my father—and I didn't care about a minor thing like blood."

"Oh. But what was your mother like?"

"At first she was running around and asking if I was content. Then we went out to eat and she met friends, and the embarrassment because I was ages, and a thousand shocks as the huge son is seen. She told everybody she was married when she was sixteen, and after we'd gotten out of the restaurant she said she was going to buy me a suit so she'd be proud of me. So we bought a ready-made suit, and I strode around with her and she kept showing me off. I was a novelty to her."

What a wealth of unhappy wisdom is here, even if relieved somewhat by delicacy of perception and spontaneous humor. Yet at the conclusion of Mr. Fisher's novel, when father and son are about to become reconciled in a new and better understanding, there seems little hope that they will actually *know* one another. The narrator, another fifteen-year-old, quietly leaves the scene when the runaway boy comes home. And as he leaves he wonders if the "crazy mixed-up world"

that both will soon be leaving is not closer to reality than anything afforded by adult existence:

I decided I had better get the hell out.

But it seemed to me something had slipped away, drifted out of the night never to come back again: a little world of freedom and confinement in which love, sadness, and joy broke against lonely beaches in overpowering waves. There had been too much to laugh at that was not really funny, and too much sorrow that was not even faintly sad. It was summer again, the leaves would be fresh and bright on the trees, the skies pale and hot, and the scents of licorice and rose thick in the air and maybe, for me, there would be Kathy. We had wakened from a long dream to see it was true, but dreaming had been a truth, and a reality by itself.

William Goldman's *Your Turn to Curtsy My Turn to Bow* involves some strained dimensions of the psyche as revealed in both high school and college. The youth whom the narrator admires twice becomes "insane." But in this story the bridge between conventional sanity and unconventional flight from reality appears an easy one for anyone to cross. Chad is a football hero, a handsome, sought-after young man. But even his triumphs do not seem real. The following haunting paragraphs describe a lonely encounter on a New York corner, following a gridiron triumph. A man dressed in rags, a cripple, walks up and stares at Chad:

"What do you want?" I said. "What do you want from me?"

"Help," he said.

"Yes," I said. "Anything."

"You've got to help me."

"Yes," I said again. "Just tell me what you want me to do." I waited, and finally he said it.

"Nobody knows I'm alive," he said. "So you've got to help me. Nobody knows I'm alive. So you've got to think about me. Because if you think about me then someone will know and I'll be alive. So you've got to think about me because nobody knows I'm alive."

I waited. He didn't come back. I took a step, then stopped. "I'm thinking about you," I said. I started to run and every step I took I thought about

him. I didn't stop thinking about him once, all the way back to the Plaza.

But when I got there I didn't know why I'd come. I couldn't remember. . . . I said, "I'm thinking about you," out loud and one of the doormen asked was there something but I shook my head and jumped into a taxi and took it back to where I'd parked my car and all the time I was in the taxi I said, "I'm thinking about you," until the driver asked me what I was saying so I stopped saying it out loud. But I thought it to myself, "I'm thinking about you, I'm thinking about you," over and over until I got back to the garage.

Somehow I made it out of New York and through the tunnel and then I was on the highway, hitting a hundred miles an hour. The top was down and the wind tore by and I could scream it again, out loud, "I'M THINKING ABOUT YOU! I'M THINKING ABOUT YOU! I'M THINKING ABOUT YOU!" and after my voice gave out I kept on screaming it, even though there wasn't any sound.

When I reached the frat house I ran inside and woke everybody up and told them to come into my room. And when they were all there I told about the man and how we all had to think about him so someone would know he was alive.

Mr. Goldman's book concludes with Chad's third disappearance:

There are many rumors. That he has been permanently put away; that he has gone to live in Europe, that he committed suicide. I have never presumed to ask the Kimberleys point-blank about it; probably they don't know either. But I do have my own thoughts on the subject. I picture him somewhere in the Orient. He is clad in a loincloth, sitting hunched on the eastern side of some gently sloping hill. His skin is black, his hair bleached white, and he is sitting quietly, waiting for the sun to rise.

What does one make of all this? Tight and orderly theories are no help. But one thing, we like to feel, is thrusting itself through the pages of such novels—a new kind of discovery of humanity—one which brushes aside most of the conventionalities of religion, materialism and psychoanalysis. Carl Jung's title, we think, was more comprehensive than the book it represented—*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

## *FRONTIERS*

### "Transcendental Influences"

IT isn't often that we have opportunity to invite a reader to go to a movie, but the question of a subscriber leaves little choice. This reader asks:

I wish you would explore the possibilities of mature individuals without transcendental influences.

The movie is *Inherit the Wind*, on the whole a very good movie, which tells the story of the Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925. Clarence Darrow (played by Spencer Tracy) is the hero of this last great battle in the war between science and religion, and he was both a man of notable maturity and one who did not admit the possibility of "transcendental influences." Darrow was a philosophical materialist, a mechanist in his theory of human behavior and development. From such assumptions he derived—or seems to have derived—his profoundly compassionate outlook. No one should stop with seeing a movie about Darrow but should go also to Irving Stone's unusually fine book, *Clarence Darrow for the Defense*, and experience the thrill and the moral excitement that are unavoidable in reading the life of this great man.

Then, if other examples of maturity among materialists are wanted, Robert G. Ingersoll is an outstanding candidate. In *Liberty of Man, Woman and Child*, he wrote:

Is it possible that an infinite God created this world simply to be the dwelling-place of slaves and serfs? Simply for the purpose of raising orthodox Christians? That he did a few miracles to astonish them? That all the evils of life are simply his punishments, and that he is finally going to turn heaven into a kind of religious museum filled with Baptist barnacles, petrified Presbyterians, and Methodist mummies? . . .

Surely there is grandeur in knowing that in the realm of thought, at least, you are without a chain; that you have the right to explore all heights and all depths; that there are no walls nor fences, nor prohibited places, nor sacred corners in all the vast expanse of thought; that your intellect owes no allegiance to any being, human or divine, that you

hold all in fee and upon no condition and by no tenure whatever, that in the world of mind you are relieved from all personal dictation, and from the ignorant tyranny of majorities. Surely it is worth something to feel that there are no priests, no popes, no parties, no governments, no kings, no gods, to whom your intellect can be compelled to pay a reluctant homage.

It is risky, of course, to attempt to prove "maturity" with quotations. Maturity runs deeper than intellectual content. We could find some wonderful quotations in Rousseau, yet would be unable to give him a mature character on this ground. But Ingersoll and Darrow, we submit, showed their maturity throughout long and useful lives.

However, we have not really responded to our reader's question at all. He asked about the development of "mature individuals" without transcendental influences, and we have produced examples of men who reached maturity in more or less explicit personal rejection of transcendental influences. This question turns on the issue of what transcendental influences are, and whether they exist, and not upon what men have believed about these things. Darrow, oddly enough, once said that "there is no such thing as justice—in or out of court," yet there is a sense in which his entire career was a struggle in behalf of justice. He also said, "I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose." But he believed intensely in the struggle for truth, and Gandhi—to bring in another mature man—identified God with Truth. Gandhi and many others would declare that Darrow's labors for truth and against the evils which cause human suffering were the expression of a "transcendental influence" in his life, and we don't see how this claim can be disproved. You may say that it can't be proved, either, and this may be so, but up to the present point we don't really know what we are talking about, since there has been no attempt to define "transcendental influence." One might wrongly suppose, for example, that belief in transcendental influences requires acceptance of some conventional form of the God-idea.

Dictionaries can be pretty confusing on this subject. So far as we can see, it is not a distortion of past usage to say that a transcendental influence in human life is an influence which has qualities which cannot be shown to be intrinsic in matter or in biological forms and functions. Transcendental philosophy is said to be "any philosophy which asserts the domination of the intuitive or spiritual over the purely empirical; especially, the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson and his followers and the social and religious tendencies to which it gave rise;—so called because of a wrongly supposed relation to Kant's philosophy."

We doubt if either Ingersoll or Darrow could find much to quarrel about with Emerson. The concentration of their efforts was rather in opposition to theological ideas and the social and moral effects of orthodox religion. They were both philanthropists and lovers of their fellows, and they had little time for metaphysical distinctions. As Bertrand Russell remarked many years ago, in his introduction to the 1925 edition (Harcourt) of Lange's *History of Materialism*, "The materialistic dogma was not set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the [religious] dogmas they disliked." As soon as church leaders began to relax their claim of infallible knowledge concerning the nature of things, their scientific opponents dropped the materialistic dogma and withdrew into agnosticism. As Darrow put it during the Scopes trial:

I do not consider it an insult, but rather a compliment, to be called an agnostic. I do not pretend to know where many ignorant men are sure—that is all that Agnostic means.

Now it seems to us that this fair-minded attitude qualifies pretty well as a "transcendental influence." Where will you find its duplicate in matter or physiological complexities? Actually, the history of materialism and of agnosticism is filled with evidence of high spiritual concerns—"spiritual," in this case, meaning such attitudes as

love of justice, love of freedom, regard for human suffering. hatred of oppression and deception.

These ennobling human qualities have to come from somewhere, and if they are not found in matter, then why not identify them as spiritual? If the word "spiritual" has too many theological overtones, let it go for another twenty-five or fifty years. Perhaps by this time the word will have been reclaimed for unprejudiced use. "God," on the other hand, is a word that seems hopelessly identified with supernaturalism and anthropomorphic conceptions. Perhaps "spirit" and "spiritual" have also been ruined by centuries of dogmatic parlance, but until new terms become acceptable these words are almost necessary in any attempt to give an account of the subjective side of nature or being.

In any event, it would be foolish to ignore the fact that ethical and humanitarian ideas have a substantial though not a material reality, and it seems a quibble to reject "transcendental" as an adjective to characterize the influences arising from this source, which have provided the driving energy in all the movements of human progress.

At this point, and for a conclusion, we quote from Thomas Huxley, who invented the term "agnostic" to describe his own philosophical position:

The man of science who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry and sliding from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood as materialism, seems to me to place himself with the mathematician who should mistake the X's and Y's with which he solves his problems for real entities—and with the further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyze the energies and destroy the beauties of life.