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PROBLEMS OF UNIVERSAL THINKING

THE role of a periodical in cultural life has its own distinctive attributes. If you think well of some great human expression, some universal declaration which touches and moves both heart and mind—say, the Sermon on the Mount—you don't just publish it and go out of business. You don't give editorial sanction to John Keats' "Beauty is truth, beauty—that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know," and then stop, determined to save our beautiful trees from the paper manufacturers while refusing to repeat what has already been well and sufficiently said. Instead, you keep on turning the kaleidoscope a little bit, each week, hoping that some of the mysterious pieces will fall into a relationship that explains *why*, when great things are repeated over and over, so few people pay much attention to them.

Or, when someone says impatiently, having listened once more to some short version of the Eternal Verities—"But we *know* all that!", a publication of this sort has the obligation to reply, "Do we?" and to discuss the question.

We have a letter which supplies a context for continuing this discussion. A reader writes:

> I as a business man thoroughly enjoy the stimulation of thought that comes from reading MANAS. I find it refreshing in the search to explain man's destiny and especially valuable in the interpretation of current trends of thought and action.
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> In your April 26 issue in the article on "The Decline of Objectivity" in the last paragraph you say, "Old dogmas about the nature of man have withered from lack of nourishment." The inference from the article is that man is ready for and reaching out for a new and higher concept of man.
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> This is a statement that begs to be believed. It promises hope for the future. Perhaps this hope is obvious in the field of education because there is evidence to support it. Is there evidence of this same hope in the world of business, labor and government?

The statement of purpose of MANAS: MANAS is concerned, therefore, with philosophy and with practical psychology in as direct and simple a manner as its editors and contributors can write." I submit that the most direct and simple statement of philosophy and practical psychology was the statement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Is this an old dogma that is withering from lack of nourishment? Perhaps it is. If it is withering, then what other view of human destiny is worthy of our attention?

In that part of our society that I am exposed to I see a people who are primarily concerned with ambitions to achieve specific goals. Whether it is missiles, plant expansion, sales, building circulation, research, etc., we are a people consumed with the desire to achieve a planned objective.

It appears to me that to gain an objective "thing" is the philosophy of our society. This is, in my opinion, the opposite pole of the Christian ethic of man's concern for man. Our national purpose today is for the rights of "things" for a man to achieve, as opposed to our Founding Fathers' concern for the rights of man.

The national purpose in the minds of many is the gross national product. I hope you are right that there is an element in our society that is aware of the real goal, that of the individual. Not in articles and speeches, but in a sensitive awareness that a *priority* demands action in thinking of people first and material goals second.

I wonder what priority the readers of MANAS actually give in their everyday work . . . pushing to get something done or fulfilling the needs of the individual within the framework of living and working?

Is our society so organized that we are *forced* to achieve a specific goal before we have time to think about a person's needs? In business with our large plant capacity, profit goals can only be realized by nearly maximum production. The pressure that builds up in this situation necessitates maximum time and energy directed to moving goods. This means the situation dictates a priority to deal with things first and people second, if at all. People are a means of

moving goods. That is their measure of worth and success.

This may be denied and much public relations activity is devoted to the corporation's concern for its employees.

I say people are concerned with "things." People should be concerned with people and the "things" will take care of themselves.

If this is right, that our first concern is with the moral and intellectual resources of human beings, how do we make the 80-degree turn in our day to day activity?

To get back to the objectives stated by MANAS, why don't our philosophers and psychologists show us how? Why don't they prove to business, labor and government that they can be more successful by giving priority to the development of people instead of to products, profits and production?

There are many ways to attack these questions, but the first important thing to do, no doubt, is to take them apart, since they really represent at least half a dozen serious inquiries. The primary separation should be of the individual and the institutional situation. The idea of loving thy neighbor as thyself is a counsel to individuals. It may be accepted or rejected; or it may be verbally accepted and not practiced. Then there is the question of what it means to "love" others. A long catalogue of evil things have been done in the name of love. Truly loving people very often means not doing what they want you to do. Love has little meaning without understanding, and the understanding of oneself, to say nothing of one's neighbors, is a difficult accomplishment.

This is not to outlaw the project with words. The idea of loving one's neighbor has an immediate, intuitive meaning which we all understand. It seems likely that if we would fulfill that meaning as well as we can, the more difficult aspects of loving would eventually become clarified.

But what we must admit at this point is that repetition of the simple injunction, "Love thy neighbor," does not bring the desired results. Nor will added publicity help. Modern institutional arrangements being what they are, the best we could hope for would be a non-profit foundation that would devote its efforts to setting up a "Love Thy Neighbor" week, with occasional free plugs on the FM radio stations, set off with appropriate homilies and announcer-type unction. The idea would be sloganized, honored in a few pulpits—it would, as we say, be "covered," just as Mother's Day and Thanksgiving are covered—and then the well-wishers of their neighbors would go on to other worthy projects, which are, of course, endless.

It seems evident that what is called for is a serious study of the meaning of loving one's neighbor, so that we may be in a position to supplement the immediate feeling the idea produces with more fundamental resolves. A lot of material on this subject has appeared in MANAS and will continue to appear. There have been the fragments from Carl Ewald's books; the extracts from Erich Fromm, Bruno Bettelheim, and Jerome D. Frank; the review of thinking by Thoreau and Tolstoy and Gandhi; the criticisms of modern culture by Paul Goodman; the extracts from modern war novels; the discussions in "Children . . . and Ourselves."

The problem of the institutional situation is raised in our correspondent's last paragraph: "Why don't our philosophers and psychologists . . . prove to business, labor and government that they can be more successful by giving priority to the development of people instead of products, profits and production?"

The short answer to this question is that philosophers and psychologists *do* offer evidence for the view that the development of people should have at least as much attention as "products, profits, and production." It is in the role of a moralist, if not a philosopher, that John Kenneth Galbraith said, a few years ago, in *The Affluent Society:* "Evaluation of the opportunities that the modern corporation affords the people who comprise it for dignity, individuality, and full development of personality should be as important

as estimates of its economic efficiency." Mr. Galbraith is now one of Mr. Kennedy's advisers, but his position here is no doubt somewhat different from that of a scholar freely expressing his opinions.

In any event, there is an enormous body of criticism directed at the fact that the solely economic ends of industrial and commercial enterprise have had a grossly distorting effect upon our culture and our people. This is far from being a new idea. It is only an idea that is unacceptable to the business community, which is now engaged not so much in devising better methods of production, but in devising more effective means of stimulating the desire for more and more goods, so that production, and therefore employment, can be maintained. "Plain living and high thinking" is not the motto of this culture. The transformation of the institutions of business and government into agencies seriously concerned with *human* development is not something that is going to happen without some extraordinary change in the attitudes of a large number of human beings. These institutions are now many-celled social organisms whose metabolism depends upon very different processes.

Dwight Macdonald has a review in the June *Encounter* which deals effectively with this sort of problem. The book he is considering is Raymond Williams' *The Long Revolution*, a work which has already had much favorable attention from reviewers. As his title implies, Mr. Williams is concerned with a vision of the good society—a society not unlike that implied by our correspondent when he suggests that our first concern should be "with the moral and intellectual resources of human beings," asking, "How do we make the 180-degree turn in our day-to-day activity?" This is precisely Macdonald's question, also. The point of his review is that Mr. Williams does not seem to realize how difficult a question it is to answer. Macdonald writes:

> I agree wholeheartedly, and perhaps softheadedly, with his [Mr. Williams'] political values, which are those of Guild Socialism, an admirable and obsolete British doctrine which resembled the anarchism of Kropotkin; a vision of a communal style of life in which groups of producers—Soviets, really, before Lenin and Stalin got to work—freely cooperate without any coercive central authority. Thus both classless collectivism and individual freedom would be achieved. It is a noble and imaginative concept, more likely to produce a decent society than the Marxian formula of using State power as the instrument of social change, a formula as dangerous as it has been successful, leading to the horrors of totalitarianism or the sapless compromise of the Weimar Republic and the British Labour Party. The difference is that Mr. Williams thinks this vision is the logical result of the democratisation and industrialisation of the last two centuries and that it can be realised without catastrophe or revolution if the majority had the will and the consciousness (commodities with which he is ready to supply them in abundance), while I see Marxian Statism as the programme which best meets the needs of mass industry. To deflect the course of history toward the Guild-Socialist-anarchist vision will require a severe break with the kind of a society we now have, that is, will require catastrophe and revolution, in that order.
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> Why doesn't Mr. Williams see this? I think because he is a preacher rather than a thinker, one more interested in exhorting than in analysing. . . . This sort of writing [Macdonald quotes some illustrations] is like marking time in military drill—but the company never seems to get on the march. The style is an end in itself a magical device for charming away by heart-warming liblab formulations, the threatening reality. Mr. Williams is fond of that great liblab word, "challenge" (he also likes "creative") and is always talking about meeting challenges. I suspect this is because he so rarely does meet them in fact.
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> The sermon is his literary form. In true preacher fashion he is forever contrasting the dismal present with the bright future which can easily come into being if only we will hearken. . . . Granted the potentialities of the labour movement for these "new social patterns," but if potentialities were horses then preachers might ride. . . . the task is not to wake us up by exhortation—we are all too painfully awake already—but to explain why these potentialities in the labour movement have not been realised, why the whole massive drift has been for five or six generations—in Germany, in England, in the United States—away from the communal democratic pattern

> that Mr. Williams rightly advocates. To this task he has not addressed himself, perhaps because he takes it for granted—as we did in the Trotskyist movement in the 'thirties—that the workers are okay, it's just those treacherous (or shortsighted, or corrupt) leaders. We never wondered why such splendid fellows invariably followed such unsplendid leaders, for we were, as I think Mr. Williams is, suckers for what Alfred Braunthal once described as "the mystic cult of The Masses, who always feel the right way and always act the wrong way."

We have not quoted these harsh words by Mr. Macdonald because we like harsh words, but because they represent the pithy facts which must be faced by all serious utopians. Macdonald, having spent time and much energy in the revolutionary movement, came by his pessimistic opinions honestly from personal experience. He withdrew, not because he lost his convictions, but because he found that the program wouldn't work; or, if it worked, it led the movement in the wrong direction. Macdonald now has no "program," as he would be the first to admit. His last positive utterance in this general region is contained in his essay, *The Root Is Man.* But making this criticism of Mr. Williams does not obligate Macdonald to become an ideologist. Simply to warn against self-deception is a considerable contribution, these days.

Well, where are we? We have had the cult of kings and princes, and it didn't work. We have had, and have, the cult of the masses, and it works, but only to totalitarian ends. The complaint of our correspondent, which we share, is that the cult of profits and production leaves so much to be desired, that we must work for a change. So far, we have been engaged chiefly in taking account of the difficulties which stand in the way.

To summarize: if you believe in brotherly love and want to put it to work, what are the barriers? There is the personal barrier and the institutional barrier. The personal barrier, to describe it in old-fashioned words, is made up of selfishness and ignorance. It is worn away by the kind of suffering which creates sympathy for others, and by deliberate reflection on the philosophical and ethical ideas which provide the rational ground of the idea of brotherhood, sustaining and reinforcing the intuition of human solidarity.

The institutional barrier is more difficult to reduce. Macdonald suggests that nothing short of catastrophe will interrupt the trend of the present society. A generation or so ago, this prospect presented no difficulties that a convinced revolutionary was not prepared to overcome by "men with guns," but violent revolution no longer stirs the hopes of very many people. The logical development of violent methods soon reaches the *reductio ad absurdum* of nuclear annihilation, with the result that revolutionaries unwilling to consider the alternative of the Gandhian methods can think of no practical way of occupying themselves. Usually, they stop being revolutionaries.

In general, this stultification of the familiar means of social revolution has led to an impasse in political social theory and thinking. Actually, the initiative has passed into other hands. You could even say that viable thinking has largely left the political region and entered the subtler area of human consciousness. The serious studies are now of mind and emotions, of culture and cultural relationships. The new politics, if you can call it politics, at all, is the politics of non-violence. Interesting relationships are springing up between mystical religion and several of the analytical schools of psychotherapy. It is even possible to suggest that a new front of human enterprise is now in the making—an enterprise which brings together the long separated currents of personal and social morality. The great pioneer in this reunion of morals was of course M. K. Gandhi. Gandhi, you could say, demonstrated the social efficacy of a personal morality which is consciously aimed at social ends, and in doing this he gave a fresh contemporaneity to the thought of Thoreau and Tolstoy, both of whom used their personal ethical convictions to social purposes.

But, someone may ask, isn't such influence only *token* influence, fractional in origin, marginal in effect? This is true enough, but will it remain true? There is at least the possibility that we are witnessing the very beginning of a new era of social and moral relationships, brought on by the threat of immeasurable catastrophe, or by catastrophes by no means entirely averted. The nonviolent drive of the American Negroes for their full rights under the law, already with a number of successes to its credit, is not negligible evidence of what this sort of influence may do when exercised with discipline by a considerable number of people. The story of the Aldermaston March of this year (see MANAS for July 12) shows the promise of a mass movement in Britain, embodying nonviolent principles.

Then there is the question: What else are you going to do? Manipulation of the people for their own good by an aristocratic elite does not lead to the society we want. Neither does manipulation of the people for their own good by a proletarian revolutionary elite. Manipulation of the people by a Madison Avenue elite for the enrichment of the free enterprise system and the hanging of goods and services on the consumer, as though he were some sort of animated Christmas tree, is not what we want, either. It seems obvious that we are reduced to the slow, long road of individual reformation, but with this difference—that the reformation must have a conscious *social* end, instead of personal salvation as a goal.

The proposition is this: Only human beings can execute 180-degree turns in their lives. Institutions cannot do it. Institutions are only the heavy, mechanical shadows of yesterday's individual directions and turnings. A free society is not a managed society. Just how business, labor, and government will be able to adapt themselves to these conclusions is beyond us, at the moment. The point, however, is that business is an activity of human beings, not an autonomous institution. People will "do business" in a way that is consistent with their lives and life goals. If these are good, their way of doing business will be good. All that we are trying to say is that there is no other way to make it good.

Some day we will wear out the tired cynicism of those who think that the people must be *led* in the right direction, or cajoled, cozzened and frightened into going that way. Macdonald is right, of course; the workers are *not* okay; but that is because they, with the rest of us, have been believers in the Cult of the Masses—the central faith of collectivist social philosophy. They are not okay because they have been waiting to have their difficulties removed by the One True System. There isn't any One True System. There are only human beings who need to figure out the meaning and ends of their lives, and then to start seeking those meanings and fulfilling those ends, meanwhile making sure that the system they let develop is the kind of a system which gets out of their way.

If we can ever get on to creating this kind of a society, we'll be able to read the Sermon on the Mount without odd feelings of embarrassment and suspicions of its irrelevance, because we shall have found the way to unite universal meanings with particular or individual forms of behavior.

REVIEW
JACK SCHAEFER'S PACIFISM

DURING his psychological explorations of Asian philosophy and culture, reported in *Richer by Asia* (1947), Edmond Taylor noted an apparently innate ability of the Indian mind to contain paradoxes without distress. For instance, the best-known portion of the Mahabharata, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, is at once an inspiration to both the warrior and to the man who renounces war. A passage from Taylor makes an appropriate introduction to one aspect of the stories of Jack Schaefer, a writer of "Westerns" whom we regard as capable of producing genuine classics of this sort of Americana:

> The hero of the Gita, the dispossessed prince, Arjuna, is called upon to do battle with his kinsmen and friends for the recovery of his rightful heritage. Like Hamlet, like many confused liberals of modern times, Arjuna is torn between contradictory ideals and duties, and falls into a state of neurotic depression upon the eve of battle. The god, Krishna, appears and, somewhat in the manner of a modern psychiatrist, teaches Arjuna to reconcile his inner conflicts, to accomplish his duty as a warrior without betraying the more spiritual values of Hindu culture, including the ideal of nonviolence. Depending upon what element of Krishna's teaching one considers the most essential, the poem can be read as a tract in favor of integral nonviolence or as a dialectic for justifying violence in a righteous cause. (*Richer by Asia*.)

Mr. Schaefer's *Company of Cowards* (Houghton Mifflin, 1957, and now Signet) is the story of a group of men—and more particularly one man—who during the Civil War refused to continue battle and were convicted of cowardice. But the causes behind the behavior so classified vary greatly, as do the natures of the men. As Mr. Schaefer develops the story, we discover that only one out of the seven is actually a fearful man. The bravest of all, perhaps, is Jared Heath, a captain who had previously sustained himself through a great deal of vicious action. Heath offended by refusing to lead his men in a hopeless assault against an invulnerable position of the enemy. His rejection of the order to charge was founded on recollections like the following:

> . . . a few seconds snatched like a camera snapshot out of the afternoon, a picture distinct in every detail of himself down on one knee holding in one hand the tiny torn lifeless body of a small bird. He was shocked, shaking with the realization that for uncounted hours he had been seeing death with unseeing eyes, blinded by the callous necessitous indifference of battle tension, stumbling about with no real awareness and striding over or around the bodies of men lying limp and lifeless in a battle-wracked dark woodland. He felt his lips curl in unwilled ironic bitterness at the thought it had taken a few bloody feathers he could cradle in one cupped hand, a single insignificant small token of destruction, accidental, purposeless, to bring this into focus for him. For an instant he saw himself alien to everything about him, out of place, out of time, and he flinched inward away from the death that smirched the air everywhere and searched in its own callous indifference for targets out of the hidden places and he rocked with the unwilled sweeping urge to be out of it, away from it, abstracted clean and young and untainted out of the whole of known existence.
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> An instant only, etched forever into his mind, and again, now by a conscious effort of will, he was Captain Jared Heath, third of the name to follow the old flag, taking the thinned ranks of his company forward across fought-over charred wasteland. . . .

And so Heath began to be plagued by a sort of bifocal vision. For three generations his family had served in campaigns to defend the United States, and the dependable toughness of men who never question their duty to bear arms—and to sacrifice their lives if necessary—was bred into him. When the Civil War began, he offered his services and, due to a natural ability to lead men, soon obtained a captaincy in the field. Heath knew that armed service, furthermore, was often the making of a hitherto half-formed personality, and he offered his best to those under his command in the hope that they could find the best in themselves. But he saw battle-broken personalities, too—the horrible maiming and torture, psychological as well as physical, which accompanied the bursting of shells. Finally the moment of his "cowardice" arrived. In refusing to

obey an order for advance in an unnecessary and useless sacrifice, he challenged the whole concept of blind acceptance upon which an army must depend. His court-martial was on the grounds of cowardice and, after being stripped of his rank in view of the entire regiment, a furious colonel ordered that he be bound upon the ground and spat upon by each soldier in turn.

Heath at this point was by no means sure that he had made a right or principled decision. Cut off from every other man wearing a uniform by the barrier of prejudice, and assigned the most degrading tasks, he knew that he had to find out why he had behaved as he did. That answer came from helping in the rehabilitation of other men assigned to him in a "company of cowards." Ultimately, nearly every one of the court-martialed officers in Heath's company conducts himself with such bravery in an Indian war of the far West that their commissions are restored. In the closing pages, we find one Major Pattison, who had quietly maintained his confidence in Heath, proudly announcing the return of his commission. But Heath doesn't want it. Years later, Pattison wrote concerning this refusal:

> I felt like a fool. I was giving that man what I will never have for myself again—and not one chance but two—a choice—two chances—to be back in the swing again, an officer on the way up. His record wiped clean and two chances to go on and gather more glory for himself and the service. The look of him—the—the feel of him—I would have said he was the best chunk of man to put into an officer's uniform I had ever laid eyes upon. He had taken those others the army chucked aside and made them into men who would follow him straight into hell—and did into something like it. I would have said he could do the same with any bunch of men you could scrape together. I would have said if I was younger, leg or no leg, I would serve under that man myself—I gave him his chances. He just smiled a funny little smile that was not at me—at something way past me somewhere. He just said: "No. Neither one. I am not good officer material."
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> Not officer material!
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> All right—if there is some crazy quirk in him that does not show—and I do not believe it—I will not believe it—let him say that. What licks me—what I cannot get at—he was happy about it. Happy! It just did not worry him at all—
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> Then he said just as if he were stating a fact about the weather—and I remember every word—he said, "I've paid my debts. To everyone. And to the army. I'm a three-year man and I've served well past three years and since I haven't accepted that commission again I'm still in the ranks. That makes me eligible for a discharge. All I want from the army is a quit-claim, complete and final."
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> That made me mad the way it would anybody decent who feels he ought to be in uniform doing his share in times like this. I tried to shame him and said something about he would likely grab at all the back pay he could get. He just looked at me—not angry or upset—just the way he was at first. He said: "No. If the army will give me a horse and a rifle, I'll call it even. Anything over can go in the post fund."
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> So we sat there looking at each other—me feeling like a fool, and he was not hard any more—just quiet and—I guess the only word for it is quiet—not just silent—quiet—and immovable—like one of those mountains over by Santa Fe. Then he said not sarcastic or mean but sort of reaching to me: "Pattison can do it." And he smiled that funny little smile but this time at me—and for a moment there I knew why those men followed him—
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> I knew too I never wanted to see that man again—not even hear about him. But he had something—he had something—he had got hold of something—I wish I knew what it was—

COMMENTARY
THE FLOW OF CHANGE

PRACTICALLY every serious observer who returns from a visit to Russia comes back warning American readers to avoid thinking of the Soviet society in terms of conditions which existed twenty or thirty years ago. This week's Frontiers article is valuable in providing a sense of the *flow* of changes going on in Russia. It's too soon, of course, to form any general judgment concerning the actual direction of the development of this socialist society, but it is already evident that rigid opinions concerning what is happening in the Soviet leviathan are almost certain to be wrong.

Speaking of socialist societies, we recently had the unexpected pleasure of meeting five mayors of Jugoslavian cities, on tour in the United States. These men—nearly all of them surprisingly young, in their thirties, we estimate—had come to Washington to attend an international gathering of local authorities, after which, with the blessing of the State Department, they decided to visit a number of American cities. Jugoslavia has the unique distinction of being a Communist country which has good relations with the United States.

The Jugoslavian mayors are intensely proud of the achievements of their young country—their constitution dates from 1946—and are eager to explain their pride in their government and way of life. Nevertheless, the impression one gets from these men—what impression is possible in a couple of hours of conversation—is that ideological tension plays a very small part in their lives. They take a normal human enthusiasm in the fact that Jugoslavian factories are run by workers' councils, that the plants pay taxes to the government, and that the workers of one plant may enjoy much more personal income than the men in a similar plant because they operate more efficiently. One thing became obvious in the course of the evening—the Jugoslavians have had enough of war. They are determined never to fight except on their own soil. They remember the bitter agonies of civil war and the strongest emotion they show is a happiness that at last they have a unified country with mutual respect and equality of rights for all the various ethnic and cultural groups.

The interesting thing about this meeting with the Jugoslavian mayors was the almost complete absence of any noticeable wish on the part of anyone to "change" the opinions of anyone else. It was rather a friendly encounter with people who believe in what they are doing. You thought of them, not as Communists, not as politicos, but as men who are intensely committed to their chosen life tasks.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A TRUE FIRST NOVEL OF YOUTH

JOHN KNOWLES' *A Separate Peace* (Macmillan, 1959; Dell, 1961) will demonstrate to any reader that the almost unqualified praise it has won from reviewers is thoroughly deserved. As with many "first" books, it is apparent that Mr. Knowles has been forming both the mood and the story for years—in this instance, apparently, since he was sixteen years old. The final writing is a remarkable synthesis of direct participation in the school experiences and a retrospect which deepens, rather than scorns, the values of that time.

We agree with the New York *Times* critic who called the book "engrossing, humorous, poignant and touching . . . instantly authoritative in impact," and the William Faulkner Foundation, which found *A Separate Peace* worthy of a newly-established award. But so far as we know, this is also the "first" story of schoolboy life we can remember which practices no exaggerations in establishing a link between all that may be best in a teen-ager and that which may become best in an adult. Here, then, is a story which is in a sense unrelated to time, place and circumstance, although showing clearly how time, place and circumstance present the framework for both dreams and illusions.

As for the writing, here is a passage concerned with the psychological setting of the story, midway through World War II:

> Everyone has a moment in history which belongs particularly to him. It is the moment when his emotions achieve their most powerful sway over him, and afterward when you say to this person "the world today" or "life" or "reality" he will assume that you mean this moment, even if it is fifty years past. The world, through his unleashed emotions, imprinted itself upon him, and he carries the stamp of that passing moment forever.
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> For me, this moment—four years is a moment in history—was the war. The war was and is reality for me. I still instinctively live and think in its atmosphere. These are some of its characteristics: Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the President of the United States, and he always has been. The other two eternal world leaders are Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin. America is not, never has been, and never will be what the songs and poems call it, a land of plenty. Nylon, meat, gasoline, and steel are rare. There are too many jobs and not enough workers. Money is very easy to earn but rather hard to spend, because there isn't very much to buy. Trains are always late and always crowded with "servicemen." The war will always be fought very far from America and it will never end. Nothing in America stands still for long, including the people, who are always either leaving or on leave. People in America cry often. Sixteen is the key and crucial and natural age for a human being to be, and people of all other ages are ranged in an orderly manner ahead of and behind you as a harmonious setting for the sixteen-year-olds of this world. When you are sixteen, adults are slightly impressed and almost intimidated by you. This is a puzzle, finally solved by the realization that they foresee your military future, fighting for them. You do not foresee it. To waste anything in America is immoral. String and tinfoil are treasures. Newspapers are always crowded with strange maps and names of towns, and every few months the earth seems to lurch from its path when you see something in the newspapers, such as the time Mussolini, who had almost seemed one of the eternal leaders, is photographed hanging upside down on a meathook. Everyone listens to news broadcasts five or six times every day. All pleasurable things, all travel and sports and entertainment and good food and fine clothes, are in the very shortest supply, always were and always will be. There are just tiny fragments of pleasure and luxury in the world, and there is something unpatriotic about enjoying them. All foreign lands are inaccessible except to servicemen; they are vague, distant, and sealed off as though behind a curtain of plastic. The prevailing color of life in America is a dull, dark green called olive drab. That color is always respectable and always important. Most other colors risk being unpatriotic.

A Separate Peace actually revolves around two unusual but not outwardly spectacular young men, one of whom was born on earth with a spiritual capacity to disbelieve in war and all the things that make for war. "Phineas" was a Zen master, though he had never heard of Zen. He was the most active of all the students at Devon

preparatory school, yet he was as much a natural pacifist as any Hopi Indian. In the Dhammapada we hear that when we observe a "wise man" we are confused, because "his path is as hard to trace as the flight of birds through the sky," and so is it with Phineas. But he is loved or appreciated by both schoolmasters and fellow-students without "reason." It is the task of the second protagonist, Gene Forrester, to discover why all this is so, and while Finny dies before the discovery is complete it none the less becomes completed:

> During the time I was with him, Phineas created an atmosphere in which I continued now to live, a way of sizing up the world with erratic and entirely personal reservations, letting its rocklike facts sift through and be accepted only a little at a time, only as much as he could assimilate without a sense of chaos and loss.
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> No one else I have ever met could do this. All others at some point found something in themselves pitted violently against something in the world around them. With those of my year this point often came when they grasped the fact of the war. When they began to feel that there was this overwhelmingly hostile thing in the world with them, then the simplicity and unity of their characters broke and they were not the same again.
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> Phineas alone had escaped this. He possessed an extra vigor, a heightened confidence in himself, a serene capacity for affection which saved him. Nothing as he was growing up at home, nothing at Devon, nothing even about the war had broken his harmonious and natural unity.

We dare to suggest that Mr. Knowles' theme, and his method of giving it life, constitute an exposition of the central theme of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. After the death of Phineas—a death to which his friend had unwittingly contributed—Forrester is to be drafted, but he had been bequeathed a state of mind which makes him unlike other warriors:

> I never killed anybody and I never developed an intense level of hatred for the enemy. Because my war ended before I ever put on a uniform; I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there.
>
> Only Phineas never was afraid, only Phineas never hated anyone. Other people experienced this fearful shock somewhere, this sighting of the enemy, and so began an obsessive labor of defense, began to parry the menace they saw facing them by developing a particular frame of mind. "You see," their behavior toward everything and everyone proclaimed "I am a humble ant, I am nothing, I am not worthy of this menace," or else, like Mr. Ludsbury, "How dare this threaten me, I am much too good for this sort of handling, I shall rise above this," or else, like Quackenbush, strike out at it always and everywhere, or else, like Brinker, develop a careless general resentment against it, or else, like Leper, emerge from a protective cloud of vagueness only to meet it, the horror, face to face, just as he had always feared, and so give up the struggle absolutely.
>
> All of them, all except Phineas, constructed at infinite cost to themselves these Maginot Lines against this enemy they thought they saw across the frontier, this enemy who never attacked that way—if he ever attacked at all, if he was indeed the enemy.

This is a fine book, a noble book, a book without pretension or selling devices; and an intensely interesting and absorbing story.

FRONTIERS

Letter from Moscow

Moscow.—A man I know went to China to write a book. When asked upon arrival what he wanted to find out, he responded, "I've come to see how much of your great progress depends upon coercion."

I have not asked this question in Moscow, though whether for want of wit or of courage I am not quite sure. Nevertheless, something of the sort has been in my mind during each of my three visits. Recently I wrote that there was a stir among people in Moscow, that something seemed to be emerging. I'm sure this is so; but I'm not sure what it is.

Living conditions for the individual are better—one should perhaps say selectively better. Vast quantities of new housing units—rarely less ugly than their predecessors—are being built in an attempt to attain the standard of four square meters per person in each family dwelling. The infamous shared kitchen and bath facilities are said to be on the way out. In new Moscow housing all street-level space is being used for shops—shops so distributed in each area, it is claimed, as to meet residents' needs for all supplies and services. Death to the Moscow queue; though until the system, as well as the amount of space, is improved, the funeral is some way off.

One can actually see the separate buildings provided in these developments for child-care; clinics are pointed out; we even saw what was described as a savings bank. But the guide and counsellor for our two-week visit refused even to consider taking me somewhere to get a simple repair done on my shoe. After I had mentioned it several times he examined it, saying: "That would be difficult. Oh! that will last until you get home!"

I'll not go through the list; your newspaper reporter will do it better. There's enough food, but its supply is "controlled": quantity and variety allowed for the May Day weekend, but one Muscovite hinted darkly that she hated to have to face the coming week; and the control is frustratingly applied: one day—and this in one of the hotels for foreigners—you can have tomato juice, next day you can have grape juice, the third you get nothing at all but the laconic: *"Soc niet,"* or, "No juice." We several times passed a shop full of feminine fripperies, something new which interested me. Before I could get in to investigate, the shop disappeared in a welter of old lumber, discarded fixtures and brick dust. Next day it reopened down the block, on a favored corner. In each big store we saw the same old trick: multiple counters selling the same stuff in various parts of the store. There was undeniable volume, but less variety.

However, this sort of thing is superficial, unless it has some important effect on the people. Lacking scientific examination, one can only speculate what that effect may be. People and their institutions are a bit like a series of two-way mirrors: each reflects the other, in turn. Would a sober though unscientific look at the same phenomena from several angles be useful?

Here is one angle. I think one thing going on in the Soviet Union might be described as the institutionalization of coercion. This is a somewhat obscure process, since in 1961 we do not talk about such gross social phenomena as serfdom, the Cheka, or even the GPU. We talk, instead, about the uncomplicated and perhaps even unconscious assumption of the Soviet citizen that some authority, somewhere, has *decided.* This amounts to a denial of choice—even when the denial is accepted—which seems to me a basic violation of the human being's role in society, and when it is accepted more or less freely it becomes a tragedy.

Examples? Yes; but I am not sure you will be convinced. Take the subject of passports. It is not only students who do not know whether they will be permitted to leave the country to attend a meeting; now it is a well-known professor, who

says that he had a passport for a trip last year, and maybe it will be thought that he should not go again. Do something about it? "Well, I could go to the Ministry, but I don't think it would make any difference." Or take my departing air reservation. I was put on a miserable old plane of a local airline, and spent six uncomfortable hours in the air, doubling the time required to reach Warsaw on the jet of the Western line I had specified. And for no good reason. There were seats on the jet, which left an hour later and was in and out of Warsaw an hour before I arrived. But it was unthinkable to my Russian adviser that I should protest. "All our departing guests," said he, "are put on the local lines." Don't paint this in unrelieved black. This same man said, with obvious satisfaction at having made a vacation decision, "This year we are going to the Baltic." I wondered, a little sadly, what they did last year.

But it seems fair to say that this relationship of the individual to his society is basically non-representative. The thoughtful Scandinavian complains that life has lost its savor because too much is done for him, but at least he has created the system by which it is done, and even periodically selects its operators. The view I am proposing of the Soviet system is that of something essentially both non-representational and non-accountable. This could lead to a fascinating discussion of what in our own lives is in fact non-representational, and perhaps only indirectly accountable. The press, for instance. I do not include the military or the CIA in this intentionally low-pressure comment.

Here is another angle. I think a process is taking place in Russia which could be described as the (re) organization of privilege. This may seem unreasonable, as against the claims of eventual egalitarianism of the Communist system, yet I cannot see how, once created, the system of organized privilege could readily be eliminated. To be sure about this one would have to go deeper into Soviet society than a visitor is able to do. It is a bit persuasive, however, that a system of privilege was admittedly the basic characteristic of the institutions of Czarist society, and though Communism is now forty years old, the people lived a previous four hundred or more years by privilege.

What do I mean by privilege? Take the matter of tickets to the Bolshoi. Can you just walk up to the box office and buy them? Ordinarily, no. Ninety per cent of the tickets are disbursed through the agencies of enterprises, organizations of one type or another, or hotels or tourist agencies. Our Soviet official companion on this trip failed twice to obtain theatre tickets through our hotel, even well in advance, and finally went back to his own agency, a rung or two higher on the ladder, and got them with apparently no trouble. Or take the annual show in Red Square. My particular personal friend in Moscow, though well-placed on the staff of an important Ministry, had never seen it. To be fair, it is quite true that tickets are not many, and do not normally reach down to his middling rank. He asked what agency was taking us, paid them a visit, told about me, and got tickets for himself and his 8-year-old daughter. He was even a little shamefaced about it, but in fact that day was the best and most uninterrupted visit we had in two weeks. I won't go on, but these are not isolated cases.

Another way to put this—another angle—and one a good deal more sympathetic, would be to say that Soviet society may be creating important new forms of social relationship. We tend to think of Soviet society as monolithic, as contrasted with our clearly pluralistic tendencies, either because we have not examined it carefully enough, or because the Soviet state maintains a monopoly of control over foreign affairs (which is the aspect of Soviet life we see most). Yet there are varieties of individual relationship which seem to be emerging in Soviet life, relieving what would be to us the dead monotony of a pre-cast social mould. This may be an important tendency, I must add a word about what appears to me to be quite new

forms of social relationship (or coercion, or privilege: you will have to choose your own word). These forms seem to spread, like the ribs of an umbrella, from the production function of society. Each person finds his place on one of these radial rib-e, leading directly from society's central core of production, and relationships one might expect to find, binding the ribs together, are notably lacking. Of course, the ribs are not by any means of equal importance. If you are in a service occupation your rib is a feeble support indeed, and my guess is that your status is not very high, but in this or in any occupation, what you get from society comes, increasingly, along this rib. You are likely to be housed in a new development built by, for or under the authority of, your "enterprise"; your medical services, child-care, shops and educational facilities are keyed to it; the face you show to the world is that of the union or cooperative society of the enterprise; your tenuous thread leading to the top of the political pyramid runs through the member of the Supreme Soviet, part of whose eventual constituency you, your work-group, your enterprise are; your very annual holiday, precious right of each citizen so organized, is determined by the enterprise ("Last year we had a lovely camp of rest in the mountains—"); and lastly, your inner violences are worked off publicly by fanatical support of your enterprise football team, the members of which are your fellow employees, receiving salaries like you: but being released from normal work up to 80 per cent of their work-time to perfect the sports machine. All "amateurs," of course. This last has even international importance, since Soviet teams, football, hockey, or other, are close to or actually hold the various world's championships. No young Russian will let you forget it.

These aspects, again, however, are superficial. The possible significance of this new type of relationship would emerge only from a careful examination of the attitudes of individual Soviet citizens. Is their attitude toward work itself different from that of a union lathe-tender in South Bend? Do they hate the boss and keep the shop stewards on the jump? Do they yearn to become Stakhanovites, as we tend to be told? Has the lack of choice in medical care, vacations, etc., a depressing effect upon the quality of services made available? Or does the existence of "something for everybody" in these lines have genuinely overriding importance? Is this a satisfactory method of giving a place to every individual in society, even if it restricts his choice of that place? Are there social rejects? Skid Rows? Why is there so much drunkenness (more each time I have come)?

And what is the system—accepted coercion, organization of privilege, new and emergent human relationships, or a little of each? I have considerable admiration for the man who knows what questions to ask and when to ask them. The trouble with me is that I usually end with more questions than I started with, and rather fewer answers.

Roving Correspondent