

## AFFIRMATIONS, QUESTIONS, DENIALS

AFTER gazing into the depths of the antarctic night, alone at an observation post in Little America, Richard Byrd returned to his frigid burrow in the snow to write in his diary:

The universe is not dead. Therefore, there is an Intelligence there, and it is all-pervading. At least one purpose, possibly the major purpose, of that Intelligence is the achievement of universal harmony. . . . The human race, then, is not alone in the universe. Though I am cut off from human beings, *I* am not alone.

For untold ages man has felt an awareness of that Intelligence. Belief in it is the one point where all religions agree. It has been called by many names. Many call it God. (*Alone*, Putnam, 1938.)

Speaking of the overwhelming feeling of order which came over him in that lonely place, Byrd wrote:

It was enough to catch that rhythm, momentarily to be myself a part of it. In that instant I could feel no doubt of man's oneness with the universe. The conviction came that that rhythm was too orderly, too harmonious, too perfect to be a product of blind chance—that, therefore, there must be purpose in the whole and that man was a part of that whole and not an accidental offshoot. It was a feeling that transcended reason; that went to the heart of man's despair and found it groundless. The universe was a cosmos, not a chaos; man was as rightfully a part of that cosmos as were the day and night.

Later, he reflected:

The human race, my intuition tells me, is not outside the cosmic process, and is not an accident. It is as much a part of the universe as the trees, the mountains, the aurora, and the stars. My reason approves this; and the findings of science, as I see them, point in the same direction. And, since man is a part of the cosmos and subject to its laws, I see no reason to doubt that these same natural laws operate in the psychological as well as in the physical sphere and that their operation is manifest in the workings of consciousness.

Byrd's reverie may stand for countless expressions of a similar nature—declarations which shade from the simplicities of an earthy mysticism—what Melville called the *all* feeling, when "your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth" and "your hair feels like leaves upon your head"—to the sense of being united with everything that is by means of a pure subjectivity. The common denominator is the feeling of *union*, ranging from feeling oneself to be the interplay of gushing torrents of a single stream of life, to the silent awareness of a universal presence which is endlessness itself—a reality in no wise diminished by filling one's being, since it does not merely fill but *is* that being.

These are wonders of subjective experience, twining like great tropical roots beneath the superstructures of every religion, every declaration of reliance on the substance of things unseen.

Byrd drew some conclusions from his experience:

Therefore, it seems to me that convictions of right and wrong, being, as they are, products of the consciousness, must also be formed in accordance with these laws. I look upon the conscience as the mechanism which makes us directly aware of them and their significance and serves as a link with the universal intelligence which gives them form and harmoniousness.

Here is the inwardly felt mandate for the elaboration of theologies, the making of moral codes and their extension into ideologies, the intention being to devise an earthly replica of the transcendental order as so revealed, and thus to participate as men in the cosmic harmony.

But there are complications. A flush of feeling that one "knows" the truth is certainly not an infallible guide for others. Centuries of bitter historical experience are compacted in the account of the universe given by Bertrand Russell forty-eight years ago:

That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving, that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; . . . that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins. . . . Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

It will not do to claim that Russell is a man without "conscience." If he is unmoved by the inspiration that made Byrd declare the alliance of man with the natural order, Russell speaks out of a conviction which says, in effect, that we must have a universe in which human beings can remain *free*, and if this dictates belief in a universe alien to all human sense of meaning, we shall nonetheless be better off than we were when subjected to the manipulations of men who insisted that they had final information—knowledge not given to ordinary men, nor known, even today, to the scientists who are increasingly the masters of the natural world. Russell's truth, unlike Byrd's, is a "derived" truth, a countervailing moral doctrine rather than a primary inspiration, and the support it seems to gain from scientific investigation is due more to the built-in bias of scientific methodology than to any discoveries of a metaphysical sort. So far as the question of cosmic "intelligence" is concerned, it may be said simply that the scientists did not find what they were not looking for, and what their research techniques were designed to exclude.

It seems clear that the tough-minded opponents of cosmic meaning and of mystically discovered links between man and nature have only a pragmatic sanction for antagonism to all such transcendental possibilities. Their real quarrel is with the *interpreters*, the claimants to spiritual authority. For the materialist-moralist, the inspired mystic is dangerous only in the way that a "liberal" may be suspected by nervous conservatives of harboring dreams of a collectivist take-over.

And there, we sometimes suppose, the matter still stands. We live in a world of uneasy compromise, haunted by mutual suspicions of competing theories of take-over on grounds of

"authority"—authority based either on privileged insights into the nature of things, or on accumulating scientific knowledge of the laws of the manipulations of things (and men), or on some rude and expedient compromise between the two. But what all such analytical accounts of the psycho-social *status quo* leave out are the "unknowns" which contribute to change in basic human attitudes—the factors of feeling about what is good, what is necessary, and the direction in which the common "sense of reality" is moving. The intellectual explanations of these processes are never adequate, but proceed on insufficient data, justifying and over-simplifying until climactic forces combine in explosive events, revealing that the hungering necessities of large numbers of people have changed the dynamics of mass behavior. Only to conform to such "brute facts" are the premises of explanation finally altered, considerably after the fact, and then, as Buckle says, when more time has passed, "even the dullest intellect wonders how they could ever have been denied."

Where is the historiographer, from Augustine to Toynbee, who can account for the emergence of a Hitler, or for that matter a Gandhi? We get more practical light on the horrors of the twentieth century from half-forgotten studies of long-drawn-out human agony than from any of the systematic theories of historical causation. Michelet's *Satanism and Witchcraft*, Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* are source materials of a sort seldom referred to by conventional historians, and we know by the sudden change in the temper of academic scholars in time of war—from being comfortable chroniclers of impersonal process they become polemicists filled with righteous fervor—how insecurely rooted is the "objectivity" of the social sciences. And where, from Bossuet's narrow Christian Establishment claims to Pareto's amoral "process" analyses, will you find a ground for understanding the slow accumulation of visionary emotion in the young, such as is now gaining expression in many parts of the world?

It is a truism to say that men are moved to action out of regard for what they feel to be real, and it is plain enough that the contradictoriness of human

behavior is a reflection of the ambivalences and emotional variability, as well as of the susceptibility to suggestion, of the great majority of human beings. Political leaders are well aware of these qualities and demagogues become expert in their manipulation. Trotsky asserted that the basic engine of revolutionary action is appeal to self-interest, Hitler discoursed on the passivity of the masses and the techniques of their manipulation. Eric Hoffer has described the shallow reflexes of the True Believer and the Passionate Man, and Stephen Shadegg, Barry Goldwater's campaign manager, reveals many of the politician's trade secrets in *How To Win an Election*. Other facets of the resources of the manipulator are catalogued by William James (in *Principles of Psychology*):

Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well-dressed and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a *bon vivant*, and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher, a philanthropist, a statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a "tone-poet" and a saint. The thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's! the *bon vivant* and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not well keep house in the same tenement of clay.

A tougher-minded but equally perceptive account of the multiple-choice careers of human beings was provided by Ezekiel Mphahlele in his *Foreign Affairs* (July, 1964) article, "The Fabric of African Culture." Mr. Mphahlele is considering the excesses of the theme of "negritude" in verse by Africans:

What I do not accept is the way in which too much of the poetry inspired by it [negritude] romanticizes Africa—as a symbol of innocence, purity and artless primitiveness. I feel insulted when some people imply that Africa is not also a violent continent. I am a violent person, and proud of it because it is often a healthy state of mind; some day I'm going to plunder, rape, set things on fire; I'm going to cut someone's throat; I'm going to subvert a government; I'm going to organize a *coup d'état*; yes, I'm going to oppress my own people; I'm going to hunt down the rich fat black men who bully the small, weak black men and destroy them; I'm going to become a capitalist, and woe to all who cross my path or who want to be my servants or chauffeurs and so

on; I'm going to lead a breakaway church—there is money in it, I'm going to attack the black bourgeoisie while I cultivate a garden, rear dogs and parrots; listen to jazz and the classics, read "culture" and so on. Yes, I'm also going to organize a strike. Don't you know that sometimes I kill to the rhythm of drums and cut the sinews of a baby to cure paralysis?

Here, euphemisms and rhetoric dispensed with, are a dozen theories of history and platforms for revolt. Barbaric yawp? Not really. It is rather a Shakespearean second-sight into the endless diversity of human motives, an implicit, unuttered vision joined with unblinking honesty. The truth is that a sense of self so informed is unlikely to produce Dachaus and will be incapable of the towering self-righteousness of button-pushing genocidal executions. It is a perspective so faithful to the grain of human life that it would not be possible save from an elevation that would immediately laugh out of town a pretentious moral defense of any one of these all-too-human patterns of behavior. It is grounded on the same, secure foundation of human beinghood that has given student criticisms of the multiversity and modern industrial society their unmistakable power.

A part of the unannounced genius of the age is that we are increasingly in the presence of a many-voiced contemporary expression of Socratic Ignorance. And it is this, finally, which will remove the terror from all those symptoms of alienation, anomie, aimlessness, and finally, deep rejection of the synthetic myths which are supposed to give modern civilization its integrity and "forward-looking" morale. To find these symptoms wholly natural to our condition gives at least the immediate relief of reprieve from the guiltiness of failure. It is our *health* that makes us feel this way. A modern novelist, George P. Elliot, participating in a similar vigor, describes the mapless, trackless region in which we live:

Nothing is harder than to have a clear, steady and sound idea of what society is and what it should be. I must speak for myself: I realize that I could not define the word to anyone's satisfaction; like many, I sometimes in desperation identify society with the state—whence horrors ensue. . . . We have no good analogy by which to comprehend our society. It is not

a body whose head is the President, nor an army, nor a corporation, nor any sort of religious body, nor any sort of machine. The commonest analogy is to an organism; but which sort of organism? A tree? It is not mobile enough. A Portugueseman-of-war? No centralization. An eagle, as the dollar says? Too small. One of the dinosaurs? That sounds pretty good—a vast, bewildered, terrifying, vegetarian, self-extinctive creature. Yes, it will serve. Our new totem: the brontosaurus. . . .

What an extraordinary emancipation—to be released from "believing" in all this horrible mess! To unburden ourselves of so much ridiculous certainty; to be able to say, *I cannot understand*, without feeling any important defeat. For only when this confession is made can there come into play long neglected human sensibilities, affirmations, and feelings of community which until then could find no outlet. The nightmare is still there, but it no longer absorbs and frustrates all the energies of our being. At last we see that these dark stupidities do not represent the place where we are obliged to seek "truth." We are beginning to recognize, instead, that every human being has his own enigmatic depths, his own existential awareness, with avenues within himself to new beginnings and attitudes toward life. There are *in us* pure currents of affection for our fellows, moments of high altruistic impulse, and interludes of intellectual clarity when the sense of seeing and knowing is strong indeed. Some men seem to have easier access to these resources than others, but all men have the same, basic potentialities, are endowed with what A. H. Maslow has called self-actualization. These capacities are not mere "concepts" or abstractions, but living processes of the mind and the feelings. They form, so to say, the totipotent germinal stuff of the wholeness we seek.

These are the realities of the human being which tend to be absorbed by externalizing (although often partially fulfilling) cultural activity, and then, in the course of time, to be ideologized, with the result that, because of the reductive intellectuality that has created the conformity society, men lose very nearly all sense of their presence within themselves. At such a time, men respond to "problems" and "challenges" in the formula terms of the culture,

ignoring their own resources, and this continues until the mechanization of the culture demonstrates its anti-human tendencies in so many ways that men begin to question and resist. It is important to see that there is no "master-plan" for resistances of this sort, since they arise, not from any abstract analysis or programmed "revolution," but out of the long denied uniqueness of each individual, according to his own inchoate longings and irrepressible feelings of need. These are *being* needs declaring themselves, and while they may for a time accommodate to familiar historical patterns of rebellion, the genuine individuality of their origin will eventually make itself felt. In the externalizing terms of collectivist and politicalized theory, this looks like "confusion," but only by the criteria which have already proved to be plans for prison-houses of the spirit.

Now this kind of "confusion," as we experience it, is a form of self-knowledge made out of intensified experience of negation of the self. The surface of conventional existence is shattered by intrusions which break out of their confinement—much as the roots of trees eventually lift up slabs of sidewalk, displace retaining walls—and assert the priorities of human beinghood in various insistent ways. In an anti-human society, the result is a vast disorder, but it comes from the higher order of *life*—from the forces of the hidden and suppressed health of mankind. It is Nature speaking through man, as it addressed Admiral Byrd.

When this happens, we are, by a critical conjunction of disturbing events with inner growth-processes, put into manifest presence with *ourselves*. The dynamics of being human are no longer masked by ideological charades. Self-definition stops being a matter of catalogued descriptions of "function" and "patterns of behavior," and begins to change into charges, cries, and affirmations of motive and meaning.

So it is that a spontaneous *concert*, a tide of discovery, fed from countless individual springs, begins to make itself heard and to be felt. This will be no canned music, no regimented flow, no directed, "implemented" movement to be stultified and exploited by the calculating plans of organizers

and manipulators. This kind of renaissance can no more be fed into the hungry maw of the "computer revolution" than you could elect Thoreau president or get Walt Whitman to manage General Motors—although the work of the world will doubtless get done, even if only as a practical improvisation, and no longer as a Sacred Enterprise.

In the current issue of *Man on Earth*, S. P. R. Charter has a paragraph on the self-denying cultural delusions which can only being dissipated by self-affirming expressions of being:

Knowing himself to be limited, sophisticated man nevertheless believes that, because he is capable of explaining phenomena, he has outlived surprise. And when astonishment descends upon him he no longer cherishes the wonder, but hastily seeks explanations. . . . Our Man-Machine world is releasing people from the brutalisation of animal-toil and the debasing boredom of repetitive toil. And yet, Man seems to be becoming a far more physical, collectivist and external being than his primitive ancestors, especially in terms of intimate hope. . . .

Primitive youths hoped to partake of the glistening mysteries of manhood; contemporary youths—increasingly throughout the world, East and West—desire to obtain the glistening tangibilities of manhood which, their leaders assure them, through the permeating devices of persuasion, are quite readily obtainable but only through their leaders' political systems. Neither East nor West accepts the reality that a Man-Machine world exerts its own permeating powers of enticement and threat blanketing all political-economic systems.

Obtainability and desire now seem to have personal meaning only when they refer to material things that can be appraised and given exchange-value, and not to concepts that can help the individual expand the multiple meanings of life. Our Man-Machine world is based upon the conquest of tangibilities. No longer a myth-maker, a creator of intimate fables to magnify life, Man's hope now is also based upon tangibilities—not only those physical, but even those emotional.

Our Man-Machine world functions with minimized strain when emotions are capable of being appraised at an actual or approximate exchange-value. This is perhaps one of the reasons why emotion is now so rarely an enlarging of self. Emotion, as a state of conscious awareness, is

suspected and seldom even recognised, by the young as well as by many of their elders, unless it is acceptably packaged for them by others who actually determine for them the nature of their desires and the degrees of assurance of their obtainability. These are the mirror-livers responding to images of themselves made for them by others; images full-colored, but two-dimensional. For their passage through life such people seek others packaged like themselves, readily recognisable to each other; and if, in time, the wrappings fade and their individual contents become exposed, they cringe from what has so long been hidden from them. And so the wrappings are now made as fool-proof as possible, they are also inspiration-proof, emotion-proof, and hope-proof. Skilfully packaged emotions *for* life and skilfully packaged answers *to* life. What a cruel corruption of the promise *of* life. . . .

These are the reasons—if we believe in life, if we believe in man—for being confident that the time has come when the springs of human beinghood will again flow through channels found by each one for himself. The plateau of ideologized mechanization is a waterless desert of the human spirit. It is not a plateau but a chasm, a subterranean depth, a lost and losing world. By what "authority" can we have such hope? There isn't any such authority, and we don't need it. It is by not needing it that we have it and can put its vision to work.

## *REVIEW*

### TOWARD HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY

IN *Current Philosophical Views*, a volume of essays by various contributors, published in honor of Curt John Ducasse, the editor, Frederick C. Dommeyer, who teaches at San Jose College, says in his introduction: "The sterile character of so much of contemporary philosophy stands in bleak contrast to the warm interest in the concerns of human beings, which is evident in Ducasse's writings." This is certainly a just comment, but there is a further reason for noticing such a book in these pages: Prof. Ducasse has had a role in philosophy similar to that of William McDougall in psychology—both, against the grain of their times, gave serious attention to the proposition that the human being is an independent moral agent who may use a body, but not be confined by it, now or forever. McDougall's *Body and Mind* (Methuen, 1911) used to the full the disciplines of Western rationality and scientific inquiry for this purpose, and his *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution* (Methuen, 1929) was an endeavor to demonstrate the inadequacies of the more sophisticated brands of scientific materialism, mainly the formulations of the Emergent Evolutionists. It was from McDougall's profound sense of the need for a substratum of scientific knowledge hospitable to transcendental philosophy that the Parapsychological Laboratory was founded in the 1930's at Duke University, which later earned the attention of all the world under the distinguished direction of J. B. Rhine.

In a fashion similar to McDougall's, C. J. Ducasse turned the tough-minded temper of scientific analysis against the uncritical assumptions of scientism, showing the wide world of philosophic possibility which opens up to minds which learn to reason impartially. During nearly twenty years of publishing, *MANAS* has kept fairly close track of Prof. Ducasse's activities. As a matter of curiosity, we checked our editorial index and found that during this time there have been in *MANAS* some twenty-five discussions

and reviews of work by Ducasse, with one lead article by him, "Is a Life after Death Possible?" (Vol. IX, No. 17). Much of the comment in *MANAS* concerning Prof. Ducasse relates to the content of his volumes, *Nature, Mind, and Death*, and *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*.

Brief quotation from the article referred to above will show the style and direction of his thinking. After reviewing some of the findings of psychic research, Prof. Ducasse discusses the bias which he has devoted much of his life to correcting:

. . . although some of the facts recorded by psychical research constitute, *prima facie*, strong empirical evidence of survival, they cannot be said to establish it beyond question. But they do show that we need to revise rather radically in some respects our ordinary ideas of what is and is not possible in nature. It will be useful for us to pause a moment and inquire why so many persons approach the question of survival with a certain unconscious metaphysical bias. It derives from a particular initial assumption which they tacitly make. It is that to *be real is to be material*. And to be material, of course, is to be some process or part of the perceptually public world, that is, of the world we all perceive by means of our so-called five senses.

Prof. Ducasse points out that while the assumption that only the material is real has its uses in relation to various practical pursuits, it produces a limiting effect in thought:

This specialized interest is of course as legitimate as any other, but it automatically ignores all the facts, commonly called facts of mind, which only introspection reveals. I now submit that no paradox at all is really involved in the supposition that some forms of consciousness may exist independently of connection with animal or human bodies, and, therefore, that survival is at least theoretically possible.

Having taken this stance, Prof. Ducasse reviews various theories of immortality, his own inclination being to the theory of palingenesis taught by Plato and Plotinus, named by Hume as the only theory of survival to which philosophy can hearken, and defended by John McTaggart and W. Macneile Dixon in modern times.

What of the book of essays by fourteen professors of philosophy, written in honor of Ducasse? At the risk of being ungracious, we would suggest the desirability of reading Ducasse first. The weight of institutionalized scientific thinking makes itself plain in the essays, even though they are all exercises in resistance to this influence. One soon recognizes the force of Lewis Feuer's attack on academic philosophy in his *New York Times Magazine* article for April 24. For the most part, and with some notable exceptions, the emancipation that has taken place in psychology through the work of the humanistic psychologists still lies in the future for the academic philosophers. *Current Philosophical Views* will probably be reviewed only in journals of "technical" philosophy. While there is evidence that the contributors are working their way out of the labyrinth of a private "philosophical" vocabulary, many of the mannerisms of a specialty remain to bother the general reader, who will probably feel that this book was not meant for *him*.

What we find missing, mainly, is the powerful sweep of human longing. This lack is what makes Feuer say that people who are seeking *philosophy* read men like Camus and Berdyaev, since they cannot "find philosophy among the academic philosophers." A large-hearted passion for truth, an anguish at the suffering in the world, an irrepressible commitment to the discovery of meaning—these are *not* the enemies of philosophic discipline, but the motive-power which lifts intellectual integrity and rigorous reasoning into the regions of full humanity. These are qualities seldom found in the works of the academic philosophers of the day. It is this absence of deep, humanist ardor, for which the world is in such need, that makes the passionate enthusiasms of Teilhard de Chardin able to command the hopes of so large a section of the modern intellectual community.

This is not to suggest that the logical disputations in this volume are without value. But

as one reads the precise reasoning, the tentative conclusions drawn, the fallacies exposed, the new directions suggested, one has the feeling that the next "philosopher" who comes along will add his revisions to an already heavily marked over palimpsest of logical subtleties, and that of the making of such further markings there will be no end. There is nonetheless a use in these activities. They inspire a wholesome skepticism toward any conclusion reached in this way, but by no means suggest the desirability of abandoning reason. There is a sense in which many such efforts are object-lessons in how to exploit the intellectual limitations of an age as the raw material of fresh exploration, and such training, in the hands of an intelligent and aroused human being, as for example R. V. Sampson, sometimes makes possible expressions which are "at the height of the times" (see Sampson's *Psychology of Power*, Pantheon, 1966). There is also a sense in which such papers are labored verifications of the classic statement of the Buddha in the *Diamond Sutra*.

Several of the essays honoring Prof. Ducasse include interesting discussions of problems of the philosophy of religion, especially on questions about "God" and good and evil. While the term "God" hardly needed to be used at all, it seems to us—considering the sophisticated level of the arguments pursued—the free and diligent exercise of reason on these matters is an antidote to sectarianism and is as useful to the pantheist as to the man of theist persuasion. Actually, the reference to God, in these pages, seems more of a loyalty to sentiment than a philosophic obligation, since the nature of thought, human knowing, and basic intuitions of value provide the ground-rules of discussion, instead of implicit theological assumptions. In short, such philosophizing doubtless clears the ground for deeper inspiration.

## *COMMENTARY*

### VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

THERE is high irony in the fact that the only people who have an intelligent and humanizing solution for the problems of our over-organized, technologically compulsive society are those who seldom get a serious hearing for their ideas. When the Thoreauvian, the anarchist-tending thinker who rejects coercive authority, the Gandhian who stresses the importance of individual integrity, and the educator who is interested in the development of personal discipline, personal responsibility and resourcefulness—when men of this sort urge that a society which is both orderly and free can be obtained only by these means, they are met with the impatient condescension of authorities who tell them that these ideas are utopian, that they can't be applied to the mass society, that there is no time for such muddling ineffectuality.

It is as though the conductor of an orchestra were expected to produce good music with a group of men who have not even elementary skills in using their instruments, and to take the place of these skills the business manager of the symphony proposes to invent (in a great hurry) mechanical devices which will make the sounds indicated by the notes of the composer—not *well*, of course; this would be expecting too much—while the "musicians" are supposed to sit and stand in the correct positions in the orchestral pit and arrange their faces in nice, "creative" (also "democratic") smiles. The business manager is a very tough humanitarian who knows what he is doing, and if you argue that this won't produce any music at all, he gets madder and madder and finally tells you you are anti-social and calls the cops. Of course, he has a lot of graphs and studies which prove you are an idiot and ought to be locked up.

The technological heaven the business manager's public relations experts describe in such glowing terms is as impossible, inaccessible, and as imaginary as the theological nonsense about "Heaven" taught with such gravity during the

Middle Ages, being as neglectful of human realities as the medieval Promised Land was of natural realities. These experts know all about "things," but nothing about man, or only about man's weaknesses and incapacities. They have at least this in common with the old theologians, that they believe in the basic incompetence (sinfulness) of human beings. They have their jazzed-up, collectivized version of all the Grand Inquisitor's self-justifying defenses of his system, and they hate any suggestion of heroic alternatives with the same fierce anger and resentful contempt.

What we have to do, first, is generate the basic *honesty* to admit our present situation—as S.P.R. Charter does in the long quotation in this week's lead article, and as Alfred Reynolds does in *Frontiers*. Then, because we are men, and *not* weak, miserable sinners, or simply incompetent psychic objects good only for computer manipulation, we'll do whatever we have to do to preserve our humanity and dignify our lives.



# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### CHILDREN AND THE ARTS

MANY years ago, in an essay included in *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*, Lafcadio Hearn wrote about the artistic sensibility of Japanese children, finding them endowed with better taste than either children or adults in the West. He spoke also of the evident fact that all Japanese children love to draw, and the ones he knew did so spontaneously, even if it were only scratching with a stick in the dust of a road.

A discussion comparing the work of Japanese children with that of American youngsters, in *Art and the Child*, by Daniel M. Mendelowitz (Stanford University Press, 1963), provides both confirmation and development of this view. After taking account of the various reasons why so many American parents, and even teachers, lack sympathy for the work of children, Mr. Mendelowitz observes:

The child's imaginative life reflects the values of the adult community, and if the community at large admires the athlete, the daredevil driver, and the glib salesman, the child will hesitate to project himself into the role of the patient craftsman or reflective artist. Even the child who loves to paint and draw, particularly as he comes into adolescence, may suffer acute ambivalence, for he knows that the world around him, whose admiration he seeks, places little value on what he loves.

When one sees the art work of Japanese children, one is inevitably impressed by the sustained interest reflected in the paintings and drawings. In contrast to former methods, Japanese children are today encouraged to paint in a spontaneous, undirected manner similar to that employed in American and progressive European schools, but their work frequently reflects a complexity and attention to detail in striking contrast to the hurried and relatively undeveloped quality that characterizes much of the painting of American school children. Many factors contribute to this difference, but one important one is the traditional reverence in which the Japanese hold the arts and crafts. The Japanese child can throw himself whole heartedly into the act

of painting, undisturbed by the feeling that what he is doing is considered unimportant by the community at large.

There is good reason, we see, for the fact that art educators, when they want to illustrate points about the work of children, are drawn to the work of Japanese children. There is less cultural "deprivation" imposed upon their art. The contribution of Rudolf Arnheim, on "Visual Thinking," to *Education of Vision*, edited by Georgy Kepes (Braziller, 1965), includes some drawings by Japanese children which enable the author to make certain sophisticated comparisons.

It would be useless, of course, for us to try to "imitate" the Japanese in respect to the subtleties of the environment they provide for their children. We could not do this, nor should we. There can be no capture of a spirit that has been centuries in the making, although it might be worth while to try to understand its genesis. One is here reminded of the excitement born in perceptive social scientists when they encounter intimately the long-preserved values of an old, homogeneous culture such as that of the Hopi Indians. (See work by Ward Shepard and Laura Thompson.) We feel the wonder of the inner lives of these people, but we are always on the outside looking in. We cannot ourselves get into this extraordinary "closed system" wrought so far in the past. Instead, we have to do what Tolstoy did when he realized that he could not "adopt" the moral simplicities of the peasants whom he so loved and admired. We must create for and in ourselves the qualities we need.

To do this there must first be a critical approach, just as Tolstoy's self-criticism brought him to climactic decision. But before this is the question: What shall we say about "art"? Well, we can say something very briefly. Going to the heights, we quote from W. Norman Brown's monograph on (East) Indian art: "Sculpture was not meant to be a reminder of a human being or of an apotheosis of a man, but of something abstract, spiritual in its reality beyond apprehension by the

senses, an ocular reference to universal knowledge that might somehow become comprehensible to humanity." At a very different level there is the saying of the Balinese—"We have no art: we merely do everything as well as possible." Or, as Richard Hertz observes in *Man on a Rock*, the medieval workmen and cathedral builders performed their tasks in a spirit of reverence almost entirely lost today: "their triumph over the refractory material of the world was not mere routine, but was understood by them in its vast metaphysical connotations." Finally, as Mr. Mendelowitz puts it:

. . . the artistic expression of children, like all of their spontaneous activity, is a kind of play. Erik Erikson in his book *Childhood and Society* says: "To play it out is the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords." The habit of using artistic expression as an emotional cathartic, a way of relieving tensions and resolving difficulties, if established in early childhood, can contribute greatly toward an emotionally relaxed and healthy personality.

We could now condemn the anti-art spirit in America, detailing the no-nonsense mood of the "frontier," the acquisitive drive of the businessman, the cash nexus view of "reality," and the corruptions worked by emphasis on professionalism—but it will probably be more useful to see how all these attitudes are reflected in higher education. In the volume named earlier, *Education of Vision*, Robert Jay Wolff discusses the verbal-intellectual excesses of modern learning:

Any college student with the gift of swift verbal comprehension, a retentive memory and a strong concern for personal status, may statistically earn the title of "superior." Yet, insofar as the quantitative scope of his achievement may cover the absence of qualitative depth, to call him superior could indeed be less than the whole truth. When this swift young mind is held back by the slower pace of his "average" classmates, a new half-truth appears in the form of a specifically accelerated study program for his benefit. The hope here is that superiority, vastly accelerated, will lead to higher and more advanced levels of superiority. But what is often accelerated is not superiority of mind and spirit but rather tidy,

academic superficialities. More critical is the fact that the independent, courageously exploratory mind is sometimes slow in its growth, and its slowness in the presence of the agile standard is downgraded to an inferior if not hopeless status.

Mr. Wolff writes on "Visual Intelligence in General Education," a subject with obvious relation to the arts, opening windows into a world of reality that the individual of typical education and experience enters only by accident or by the leadings of an inner "genius" which we find difficult to understand on any hypothesis. Perhaps the best way to get at this world is to spend a considerable time with someone who lives there—an artist who embodies in his life something of the varied meanings we tried to suggest earlier. Immediate contact with heightened visual intelligence is an almost revelatory experience. To go on a trip with such a man—or woman—is to be led by the hand, visually speaking. Vast interiors of meaning hide in the external world for such people. And then, there are the socio-moral correlations which become manifest in their lives—their indifference to matters which are merely instrumental, the way their eyes light up when the talk is about ends-in-themselves. This non-verbal access to the world of value is something every child is born with, and it has its most natural "secular" expression in what we term the arts.

Well, we can't change the philistine temper of our culture—not all at once—but we may be able to create little groves of sympathy and understanding where our children are able to develop the strength to be better pioneers and reformers than we have been.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **The Inner Emigration**

JESUS, the teacher, the fisher of men, the example of man's victory over death, has failed. His teaching has found no response. His cry, "Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" remains unheard, his example unheeded. Christ, the god, the resurrected Shepherd, has triumphed. Mighty and rich organisations serve his cause and many hundred thousand church bells ring out every day to glorify his name. It was, indeed, Jesus' failure which brought about the triumph of Christ, it was the latter's success which we must sadly relegate to the history of human failure.

Had the apostles and disciples of Jesus accepted his teaching, their lives would have been enriched by its effect which would, perhaps, reach down to our own age. His name would have been forgotten. As it happened, his name was exalted, but the spirit vanished and the church bells are ringing over a world the ruler of which is his adversary.

From this point of view all conversions to Jesus Christ, all missionary work and all proselytizing are of no avail. People are not being converted to the lonely figure and noble thought of Jesus of Nazareth, but to the powerful organisations masquerading as his church.

The doctrines of Christianity have always been at loggerheads with the simple notions of Jesus' early Jewish followers who believed in equality before God, social justice among men, community of work and possession, "from everybody according to his ability" (Acts II:29) and "to everybody according to his need" (Acts 4:35).

Many a believer was tortured on the rack, burnt or quartered for holding ideas which seemed commonplace to Jesus and his disciples.

Similar beliefs pass under the names of socialism or communism in our own age. They

are based on the assumption that men are willing and able to share the fruits of their labours with their fellows, and that—given the chance of a materially fulfilled existence—they would not interfere with their neighbour. Millions have transferred their allegiance from the "humane" ideas of religion to the "humane" ideals of political utopianism or its special varieties pretending to be scientific.

Little has changed in the daily existence of the new believers.

Practise was unaffected by principle, and the convert behaved in exactly the same manner as his unconverted fellowman. We may see in the world-wide context that the spirit of social and communal ideals has vanished while their symbols have spread over a world where the oppressor and exploiter reigns supreme.

How futile is it, then, to count the number of the converted? To rejoice over increases of membership or votes? To point proudly to electoral victories? In associating the ideas of social justice with the hopes of the broiler-man, people reduce the chance of freeing the world from its frustrating fetters.

Many a rebel who kept rebellion alive in his heart after the victory of his revolutionary leaders, has had a sad awakening. His rebellion was crushed with greater ferocity than was ever displayed in the struggle against the old enemy. In some (non-communist) countries communists are proscribed, but they are certainly not tolerated in countries ruled by "communist" governments.

The desire for peace has always been inherent in the thought of men following the ideas of social justice. In the modern world, threatened by universal extinction, men and women have declared war on all wars, calling themselves pacifists. Sometimes they adhere to a doctrine in which opposition to war is implicit, but often they are just ordinary people revolted by the callous inhumanity of their warlike rulers.

Organisations have been formed to carry the flag of pacifism; rallies, demonstrations and protest marches showed the world what a proportionately small minority believes in "peace and goodwill toward men." Some remarkable intellectuals, too, have come out on the side of survival only to be branded as freaks by a "realistic and matter-of-fact" world.

The organisations soon became anxious to find a *modus vivendi* with the political world in which they were—politically—active. Members of parliament spoke in rallies, marched and demonstrated. Church dignitaries expressed their support while their superiors spoke in defense of belligerent standards. The rank-and-file grew confused and dwindled.

It became obvious that it was futile to join any of these organisations. Their political aims were naïve, their protest directed to a void, and the enthusiasm of their supporters was frittered away in meaningless activity.

In the supermarket of ideas there was a sharp decline in the price of more universally current commodities. New, attractive goods appeared: existentialism, Buddhism, varieties of Hinduism, scientology and the like. Disappointed people were avid customers.

Perhaps I should finish here. These are facts, anything else would be "emotive noise." Yet, I cannot forbear making such noise—to my ears it still sounds like "a voice crying in the wilderness."

A few men and women everywhere in the world still wish to rescue their vision of man and of human existence. They still resist being swamped by the broiler-men and their breeders. They are heirs to an age-old struggle and its means—the wealth of human thought. Organisation is not their method because it would soon be converted into a new broiler-house; its protests would fail because there is no one to whom to protest; its actions would backfire because political action (and it is only *political* action people mean when they use the word) by

its nature precipitates the advent of the Brave New World.

In the Third Reich there was an unorganised focus of resistance—it was called Inner Emigration. Without being acquainted with the Pirke Aboth and the sayings of Rabbi Hillel, they applied his principle of "hating authority without making oneself known to it." This was the only way to confront an authority which exterminated all opposition. The members of this Inner Emigration remained unaffected by National Socialism and did not cooperate with the Nazi State. Their method did not always work; it implied grave dangers and sometimes even inconsistencies. Yet, no other method has been found to oppose the totalitarian ruler.

A large part of the world is not yet totalitarian. Preparing for the work of Inner Emigration *now* gives us an opportunity the German opposition did not have. Those who are against it hasten the victory of Mammon through indifference or through misguided faith in ideas which have become guide-lines to the dehumanisation of man.

It is unfortunate that my appeal will remain "a voice crying in the wilderness."

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