

## BEYOND "RATIONAL" PROGRESS

ONE cannot overestimate the value of good questions. They are far more realistic than answers. I mean that life is a question. We delude ourselves when we think we have found answers. In reality, we can only learn to ask better questions. So, perhaps the best question of all is one that has a fundamental certainty built right into it. I suggest that "What constitutes Progress?" is such a question.

This question does not doubt that progress is possible. It assumes an attitude of optimism that not every contemporary observer can support. But, some optimism is essential to human development. (How can a man exert himself to go forward if he is convinced that forward motion is impossible?) Provided we can orient ourselves toward the dynamic character of the human situation as well as toward its static aspects, let us proceed to refine our question. We are fortunate that Bertrand Russell has provided us with an excellent starting place. In *An Outline of Philosophy*, he endeavored to look at life "from the standpoint of an outside observer."

Speaking broadly [he said], the actions of all living things are such as tend to biological survival, *i.e.*, to the leaving of a numerous progeny. But when we descend to the lowest organisms, which have hardly anything that can be called individuality, and reproduce themselves by fission, it is possible to take a simpler view. Living matter, within limits, has the chemical peculiarity of being self-perpetuating, and of conferring its own chemical composition upon other matter composed of the right elements. One spore falling into a stagnant pond may produce millions of minute vegetable organisms; these, in turn, provide life for larger animals, newts, tadpoles, fishes, etc. In the end there is enormously more protoplasm in that region than there was to begin with. This is no doubt explicable as a result of the chemical constitution of living matter. But this purely chemical self-preservation and collective growth is at the bottom of everything else that characterizes the behavior of living things. Every living thing is a sort of

imperialist, seeking to transform as much as possible of its environment into itself and its seed. The distinction between self and posterity is one which does not exist in a developed form in asexual unicellular organisms; many things, even in human life, can only be completely understood by forgetting it. We may regard the whole of evolution as flowing from this "chemical imperialism" of living matter. Of this, Man is only the last example (so far). He transforms the surface of the globe by irrigation, cultivation, mining, quarrying, making canals and railways, breeding certain animals, and destroying others; and when we ask ourselves, from the standpoint of an outside observer, what is the end achieved by all these activities, we find it can be summed up in one very simple formula: to transform as much as possible of the matter on the earth's surface into human bodies. Domestication of animals, agriculture, commerce, industrialism have been stages in the process. When we compare the human population of the globe with that of other large animals and also with that of former times, we see that "chemical imperialism" has been, in fact, the main end to which human intelligence has been devoted. Perhaps intelligence is reaching the point where it can conceive worthier ends, concerned with the quality of human life rather than the quantity of human life. But as yet such intelligence is confined to minorities, and does not control the great movements of human affairs. Whether this will ever be changed I do not venture to predict. And in pursuing the simple purpose of maximizing the amount of human life, we have at any rate the consolation of feeling at one with the whole movement of living things from their earliest origin on this planet.

The notion of "chemical imperialism" may be appalling at first, but it opens up marvelous possibilities for the study of progress. We may now say that progress is, in principle, an empirical phenomenon. Ultimately, progress may be measured in terms of population increase. This makes us uneasy because we know intuitively that there is a great deal more to survival than just having lots of babies. Nonetheless, "chemical

imperialism" seems so generally operative as to make our standard valid.

In this last half of the twentieth century, we are being forced to realize that (so-called) higher values are not just nice to have; they are absolutely essential to our survival. Now, more than ever before, we should see that the quantity of human life *cannot* be increased indefinitely without regard to its quality. Anyone who has, for example, observed a population of wild rabbits from year to year will have noticed a cycle of roughly seven years in which the population increases recklessly and then decreases. Just when the rabbits seem to have taken over a neighborhood, the majority of them are killed by predators and ravaged by disease. We are different from rabbits in our capacity for what Alfred Korzybski called "time-binding." That is, we can learn from year to year how to cope with predators and disease and malnutrition. But, we are not so thoroughly different from rabbits that we can ignore the checks and balances of nature.

We may gradually change the balance of nature in our favor, but we may not ignore it. Our greatest mistake is to think that we have made progress (i.e., moved the balance of nature in our favor) when, in fact, we have only heaped up bodies beyond the balance point. The alarming increase in the incidence of venereal disease in America and the report that psychosomatic asthma is reaching epidemic proportions in Harlem are just two small indications that we cannot afford to neglect quality in our quest for quantity.

The really striking indication, however, is the undeniable possibility that our entire species will be destroyed within a decade. Rabbit indiscretions result in temporary predominance of predators and parasites. In our case, the consequences may be other than temporary. The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy has been running a full-page newspaper advertisement in which it identifies the cockroach, which has an

extraordinary radiation tolerance, as "the winner of World War III."

Technological advances are certainly essential to progress, but the view that technological advances and their influences on society are *sufficient* (for progress) is perilously short-sighted. Actually, the word *progress* is so often used in connection with developments which are, to say the least, questionable that we shall have to coin a special word for what we mean. I suggest that we establish a convention of saying *Manasprogress* whenever we refer to a shift of the balance of nature in our favor.

Henceforth, *Manasprogress* could signify the great mystery and the chief goal of our aspirations. The quest for Manasprogress could incorporate our searches for truth, and our gods could be called guides. Manasprogress would always be a mystery because we can never know all that happens in the universe that is relevant to our survival. What now seems to be a progressive trend may one day result in the destruction of our species. What now seems dangerous or eccentric may lead to vast increases in the quantity and quality of human life. By measuring population growth, incidence of disease, malnutrition and functional disorders, availability and utilization of resources, and so on, and by projecting trends, we can guess how far we are shifting the imaginary "balance of nature" and how far we are deviating from it. Through great uses of intuition and a lot of hard work, we may renew our efforts to bring about Manasprogress. But, the only certainty we shall ever have is *life* and that we want more of it. This act of faith is the very foundation and purpose of rationality.

Further, it may be all right for a rational anthropologist to say that a man's notions of truth and God are conditioned by the culture he has grown up in, but what is the culture of an anthropologist? "From the standpoint of an outside observer," cultures rise and fall or remain stable in relation to the balance of nature. Men are ultimately motivated by the quest for

Manasprogress. Religions, ideologies, social structures, and other formalities are all facets of the quest. They enable men to secure the improvements already achieved.

When we look at the present of human affairs and ask ourselves, "What constitutes Manasprogress?" we see that the present rate of increase in world population cannot be maintained. Without radical social, economic, technological, and other changes, the present rate of increase will soon result in drastic decrease. The task of coping with humanity's rising food requirements would itself require vast changes on every level. Failure in this would probably result in widespread disorder and violence in addition to famine. Still, every head of state in the world could make substantial improvements in food production and distribution his prime concern, with the result that disaster would merely be postponed. The reason is that men do not live by bread alone.

The very potentials which enable men to gain in the struggle to feed and shelter themselves require development for their own sake. Work is not only a means to life; it is life. Hence, the existential observation: a man is what he does. If a man ceases purposeful activity, he dies just as surely as if he ceases to eat. The usual lists of needs and emotions and the usual formulations of motivation (*e.g.*, drive-reduction, stimulus-response, positive and negative reinforcement) must be regarded as superficial observations relating to the essential, irreducible life-process. We have Maslow, Fromm, Rogers, and their colleagues to thank for helping us to bring our everyday activities into harmony with this infinite aspiration nature of human life.

Gradually, we come to understand that—quite apart from material prosperity—when a person fails (for whatever reasons) to discover suitable opportunities for self-actualization and make use of those opportunities, he is in trouble. Human potentials cannot be conveniently de-fused when there is no clear and present call for their

use. People can get lazy and complacent, of course, but potentials which are not used for creative purposes tend strongly to degenerate into destructive forces. A frustrated creative power becomes a destructive power. When (as Paul Goodman has told us) there is not enough man's work to do, when there are not enough opportunities for authentic activity, then we should not be surprised that the nation's crime rate is climbing steeply. Moreover, we can expect emotional disturbances to cripple a greater portion of the American population. Worst of all, we can expect a climate in which war is not merely possible; it is unavoidable.

The problem was clearly set forth by A. H. Maslow in the preface to *New Knowledge in Human Values* (Harper Row, 1959)

We . . . are in an interregnum between old value systems that have not worked and new ones not yet born, an empty period which could be borne more patiently were it not for the great and unique dangers that beset mankind. We are faced with the real possibility of annihilation, and the certainty of "small" wars, of racial hostilities, and of widespread exploitation. Specieshood is far in the future.

It is high time each of us began facing up to the realities implied by Manasprogress. The fact of our country's present military role in the affairs of Vietnam is stark testimony that, in education, industry, religion, philosophy, science, music, painting, and literature, in all these areas and more, we have dishonored our manhood. We should each try to meet the challenge of Manasprogress "because if mankind generally did otherwise, there would be no human race." C. E. Ayres has elaborated on this theme in *Toward Reasonable Society* (University of Texas, 1961):

Precisely this, indeed, is Kant's "categorical imperative": so act that your every act is consistent with the life process of mankind. The universe may be supremely indifferent to the fate of the human race, if indeed it means anything to impute a human attitude, indifference, to the universe at large. Human values do not derive from the universe at large. They are not quite as extensive as all that. Nor do they derive only from the sentiments and

superstitions of particular tribes. They are vastly more extensive than that. Genuine values derive from the life process of mankind, a process to which every man is committed by virtue of already being a man.

If genuine values prevailed in America, we would not be wreaking havoc in Vietnam to force an end to "Communist aggression." We would not be issuing psychotic pronouncements about protecting our "national honor." We would be studying the problem of relating democratic forms to the special conditions of life in Indochina, Latin America, and other areas. We would greatly expand our aid programs of the Peace Corps sort. In general, our manifest concern would be with people-to-people contact. We would deploy forces skilled not in dealing death but in guiding grassroots movements toward consistency with the life process of mankind. We would be moved by desire for a full life rather than by the grim considerations of nuclear strategy, counter-insurgency, and power politics which are presently standard. Our attitude might reflect more reverence for life and less preoccupation with death.

We need not continue to be the passive victims of historical circumstance. We can take positive steps toward survival and specieshood right now. Virginia Naeve has outlined (MANAS, July 14) a veritable life-style of specieshood. Surely, such a life-style is within the psychological means of more than a few affluent Americans. The simple awareness of Mrs. Naeve's example\* should be enough to set many bored suburban housewives on the trail of meaning. More dramatically, we could all refuse conscientiously to serve in the armed forces or take part in the production of military equipment. But, this alone would not be realistic. It may well be that each expansion of U.S. intervention in Vietnam marks a

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\* Long involved with the peace movement, Mrs. Naeve has recently established contact with Negroes seeking better opportunities by collecting used clothing and sending it south, and in many ways she has fostered understanding between people of different countries.

setback for the cause of freedom and civilization; it may be that a military solution to the advance of Communism is impossible. But, sudden collapse of the U.S. military-industrial complex or even immediate withdrawal from Vietnam are not events rational men hope for. Rather, we need desperately to develop alternative institutions and patterns of action for solving international problems. We have gotten a start in the business of developing alternatives by trying to face the problems of "race" and poverty and oppression in our own country. We should extend these beginnings—even into other countries. If we must resort to "escalation," let us escalate with the American Field Service or the Peace Corps.

In general, we need to be more personally active—not just busy. The authentic life is one of personal commitment to intelligent involvement in the life process of mankind. This means activities for their own sake which integrate the personality and improve organic functioning: athletics, dance, music, painting, poetry, and disinterested inquiry. But, primarily, it means giving our attention to such practical matters as utilization of resources and the structure of education and political-economy. Manasprogress cannot be rationally preordained. We can, however, take steps to make it possible.

Realizing that the central fact of the human situation is an *élan vital* which exists in each man, we can proceed to give this constructive impulse the fullest possible play. Our first objective might be to make procreation a truly voluntary process for all human beings so that each quantitative increase in human life is also a qualitative increase rather than a threat to existing life. In Asia, India, and Latin America, population pressures are often so overwhelming that it is hard to maintain a "controlled misery" standard of living, to say nothing of raising the standard. We should give greater support to birth control as a means of increasing the dignity of life. Next, we must try to bring about a better balance between overcentralization and chaos. As each individual

tries to extend his own life, he is likely to exploit others. Even the most loving husband could not prevent himself from dominating and oppressing his wife if she did not occasionally defend herself. Without implicit and explicit enforceable ground rules, human society would be impossible. There would be only conflict and chaos. But, strict definition of interpersonal relationships and massive federal control of business, the arts, education, and science is no solution to the problem of evil. Ideally, our goal should be freedom and opportunity for all. Thus, we need man-made structure: controls to prevent any special individuals or groups from using others as a means only and institutions to support viable patterns of activity. Everyone should have an opportunity to freely explore his creative potentials so long as he does not coerce others.

To an alarming degree, Americans do not have opportunities to freely explore their potentials within the bounds of harmony. Many feel that they are hardly better off than prisoners. The majority have become dangerously dependent upon circumstances and trends for which there are no normal means of control. As employees of big business and big government, as members of large pressure groups, and as students in large, state-controlled schools, most Americans have little chance to humanize their environment or their life-style. Spontaneity and the natural inclination toward Manasprogress have little chance to assert themselves in a highly formal world governed by petty authorities.

Happily, a proposal that could form the basis for a genuine humanistic revolution in this country is gradually gaining momentum. Within the past few years, a score of important writers have proposed that we take legislative action to guarantee an annual income for every American. Barry Goldwater's economic adviser, Milton Friedman, argued for this in *Capitalism and Freedom* (University of Chicago, 1962). Friedman calculated that, through the mechanism of a "negative income tax," the incomes of the

poorest 20 per cent of the U.S. population could be supplemented so as to bring them up to the present 20th percentile level for about half the amount of money that was being spent on all kinds of inefficient "welfare" programs. This relatively inexpensive provision would not only deal directly with the problems of poverty, it would give every American that crucial measure of independence from existing forms which makes freedom possible.

If all Americans were insured of a basic income, they could then reject the Gross National Product as a standard of success and do the things which really absorb them. (Paul Goodman suggests this in his latest book, *People or Personnel?*) We could reject all the values which now seem incredibly artificial and discover new values and life-styles that befit human beings. I do not mean to suggest that this would be a panacea, but it would provide us with a better chance of making democracy work in populous modern society.

Manasprogress is not a rational process in the sense that fixed objectives can be established for five-year plans or in the sense that it can be measured in terms of GNP or consumer production or college degrees granted or even year to year population increases. Rather, it is a democratic process governed by the myriad rational and non-rational life-choices of millions upon millions of individuals. We can further the cause of Manasprogress by committing ourselves to the never-ending inquiry and involvement that life requires and by seeing that others have enough room to make similar commitments.

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## REVIEW

### "NEW" PSYCHIATRIC APPROACH

PREVIOUS discussions here of Dr. William Glasser's Reality Therapy have been admittedly incomplete, and review of what purports to be his "definitive" volume, *Reality Therapy: New Approach to Psychiatry* (Harper & Row, 1965), now at hand, is difficult. Dr. Glasser, it seems to us, has become increasingly tendentious, with criticisms of Freudian thought so sweeping as to require counter-evaluation. Further, we are inclined to think that the anti-Freud emphasis of O. Hobart Mowrer's Foreword may obscure the validity of Dr. Glasser's practical discoveries in therapy at the Ventura School for Girls, beginning in 1962.

Dr. Glasser's work at this institution for delinquents—a "last stop before prison"—became a pioneering effort after he was forced to a disquieting conclusion: delinquents who had been taught that the cause of their misbehavior was the result of things that had happened to them in earlier childhood were provided with versatile excuses for continuing irresponsibility. Successful therapy, Dr. Glasser came to think, could only begin with the acceptance of responsibility for present and future conduct. So was it not clear, as Mowrer quotes Glasser, that "Freudian emphasis" wrongly encourages the therapist to "accept excuses, ignore reality, or allow the patient to blame his present unhappiness on a parent or an emotional disturbance"? The therapist, Dr. Glasser then argued, "can usually make his patient feel good temporarily at the price of evading responsibility; he is only giving the patient 'psychiatric kicks' which are no different from the brief kicks he may have obtained from alcohol, pills, or sympathetic friends before consulting the psychiatrist." But, as Herbert Fingarette makes clear in *The Self in Transformation*, no one who understands Freud can believe that he equated freedom from responsibility with the elimination of neurotic feelings of guilt. The aim of therapy for Freud, as

for Dr. Glasser, was the increasing of "ego-strength," *i.e.*, a commitment to responsibility to one's total situation—past, present and future. Dr. Glasser seems to neglect this important consideration—an omission that encourages Dr. Mowrer to slant his Foreword with such misleading sentences as these:

Conventional psychiatry and clinical psychology assume that neurosis arises because the afflicted individual's moral standards are unrealistically high, that he has not been "bad" but *too good*, and that the therapeutic task is, specifically, to counteract and neutralize conscience, "soften" the demands of a presumably too severe superego, and thus *free* the person from inhibitions and "blocks" which stand in the way of normal gratification of his "instincts." The purview of Reality Therapy is that human beings get into emotional binds, not because their standards are too high, but because their performance has been, and is, too low. . . . This categorical reversal of both the theory of neurosis and the intent of psychotherapy has far-flung implications.

Dr. Mowrer is the author of *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (1961), which we once called "an effective critique of classical Freudian therapy" (MANAS, Feb. 5, 1964) However, Dr. Harry Slochower, editor of *American Imago*, convinced us that this generalization missed a crucial point. In a communication published here (MANAS, April 8, 1964), Dr. Slochower observed:

To be sure, psychoanalysis does take cognizance of genetic factors and thereby tends to reduce a patient's *feeling* of guilt as distinguished from *ontic existence* of guilt. But it does not say to the patient: You are what you are because your father was a wretch and your mother a witch. It does take seriously what the patient may *interpret* the parental figures to have been. But its aim is to liberate the patient from persisting in his infantile reactions to such alleged experiences towards realizing that he is *now not* an infant, and what may have been appropriate behavior and emotional reaction earlier is now not appropriate (this occurs in the process of resolving the transference). Psychic determinism explains the present only partly in terms of the past and psychoanalytic therapy is predicated on the principle that the past need not be forever repeated

and that it does not determine the future. In short, here determinism is not fatalism.

The theoretical backing for this point has been reinforced by the development of ego psychology with its notion that generic determinism and neurotic conflict are supplemented by the existence of "a conflict-free ego-sphere." This is also implied in Freud's principle that sublimation provides *neutral* displaceable energy.

So much for some of the confusions involved in presenting "Reality Therapy" as both antithetical and superior to the Freudian approach. But if we turn to those portions of Dr. Glasser's discussion which are affirmative rather than contentious, many emphases of importance can be noted, arising, in our opinion, from the author's practical experience and pioneering efforts. Speaking of the inadequacy of "mental hygiene" in the public schools, he writes:

Unfortunately, under our present system there is no provision for helping people before they manifest serious irresponsibility. Increasing numbers of mental hospitals, correctional institutions, and psychiatric facilities are required because so many people have not been taught to fulfill their needs early in their lives. Planned programs for mental hygiene (the commonly accepted term for the prevention of irresponsibility) directed toward teaching children to fulfill their needs so that they do not need psychiatric treatment later in life are essentially nonexistent. Our departments of mental hygiene are really departments of psychiatric custody with varying degrees of treatment. True mental hygiene has not proceeded past the discussion phase in most states, in many not even so far.

It is my belief that mental hygiene is stalled because our present psychiatric approach emphasizes mental illness rather than responsibility. The public schools, by far the most logical place to do any real preventive psychiatry, are reluctant to associate themselves with any program so completely identified with the "mentally ill." Until we can rid ourselves of the idea of mental illness and the concept that people who need psychiatric treatment are "sick," we will never be able to enlist public support for a mental hygiene program in the public schools. Assuming, however, that the emotional obstacle of "mental illness" could be overcome and that the schools were willing to participate in a mental hygiene program, conventional psychiatric concepts would be totally

inadequate for the job. As long as we cling to the belief that to help problem children we need highly trained professional people working in the traditional areas of case history, unconscious conflicts, insight, and transference, there will be no way to approach the public schools.

From one standpoint it may be suggested that the essence of "reality therapy" is identical with fundamental themes of existential philosophy: the moment is *now*; the crucial place of decision is *here*. Responsibility begins with insight which eliminates the illusory separation of past, present and future. Responsibility begins when the individual believes that he can wish, desire, or decide for himself. But philosophic depth is needed to support this conviction. Again, we draw on Fingarette's *The Self in Transformation* for a synthesizing view reaching beyond the confines of doctrines and "schools":

Moral man must *accept* responsibility for what he is at some point in his life and go on from there. He must face himself as he *is*, in toto, and as an adult, being able now in some measure to control what happens, he must endeavor so to control things that he is, insofar as possible, guiltless in the future. The neurotic, of course, cannot ordinarily do this without the preliminary aid of therapy.

This may seem a harsh view of life, an arbitrary and inhumane one. In fact it *is* harsh to a degree, but it is *not* arbitrary or inhumane. . . . It will always appear unjustifiable as long as one looks to the past for the reason. It is to the *future*, however, that we must look for the justification of this profound moral demand. It is not that we *were* children and thus nonresponsible but rather that we are *aiming to become* mature persons. This *ideal*, and not the past, is the ground for the harsh demand that we accept responsibility for what we are, even though we are in many ways morally evil and even though we could not help ourselves.

**COMMENTARY**  
**OTHER HALVES**

THE play on the word "Manas" in this week's lead is a little embarrassing—after all, who knows what true "progress" is? Taken, however, as meaning simply growing human understanding, the expression seems apt. The progress which spreads out and underwrites all genuine human needs is what our contributor is after, and this is obviously a matter for questing human intelligence, not for publishing results. Yet the presence of ends in the means indicated is not obscure, and this, we think, is vindication enough of Mr. Benson's contentions.

We have one exception to take. Any advocacy of population control should be accompanied, we think, by notice of the fact that a manipulated reduction of the exhaustion and misery of mothers with too many children cannot of itself generate those attitudes of mind through which human beings become compassionate and generous toward others. While we are well aware of the forceful arguments for birth control, there is nonetheless a tendency to make this argument partly in escape from conditions that could be largely ameliorated by ending war. Surely a much larger population could be properly fed were the scientific intelligence now devoted to destruction turned in this direction. And there is, at the other end of the scale, an easy avoidance of responsibility by people who fear the tasks of having and loving children. We know of no way to tell how much indifference and personal selfishness have already been generated by this means. Technical control of fruitfulness in behalf of "mass" problems is blind to such questions.

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The question gently raised in *Frontiers* regarding Alice Herz' self-chosen death concerns the means to reach the hearts of other human beings. This question has always to be met, and, if for no other reason than to honor those who meet it by extreme self-sacrifice, we need to bring

to it all the intelligence and human sympathy we can muster. Indeed, in such hours of wondering, Bertolt Brecht's poem lies like a live coal in the memory:

The old books tell us what wisdom is:  
Avoid the strife of the world, live out your little  
time  
Fearing no one,  
Using no violence,  
Returning good for evil—  
Not fulfillment of desire but forgetfulness  
Passes for wisdom.  
I can do none of this:  
Indeed I live in the dark ages!

Every man raises his half-truth to the power of wholeness when he acts. But he needs to remember the other half he did not act upon, as Brecht remembered:

. . . Alas, we  
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness  
Could not ourselves be kind.

Remembering made Brecht an honest man. It did not necessarily make him right. Yet, with enough such honest men in the world, we should not need to be so everlastingly "right."

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves ON TEACHING VIRTUE

A MANAS reader and sometime contributor, B. M. Carpendale, of the University of Toronto, returns to a subject discussed in these pages twelve months ago:

If it is not unfair to return to an argument a year old, I have some material (attached) which might illustrate one of my points.

On Sept. 30, in "Frontiers," you were a little defensive about my "swing at the humanities," and pointed out that I was actually drawing upon resources of meaning represented by them. This is true, and my objections to "the Humanities" are not based upon a distaste for them, but an irritation with their failure to do more than give intellectual knowledge, and logical manipulative ability. I am more concerned with the teaching methods than the content.

In studying the humanities, the student learns a great deal about courageous and wise behaviour, generous and ingenious ways of tackling social situations, and penetrating and persistent attempts to resolve conflicts constructively. He probably even sometimes gets as good if not better insights into practical psychology and sociology than students who study those subjects explicitly. But in most cases it remains in the intellect. If this were not so, then one would expect professors from the humanities to be significantly more responsible, courageous, and ingenious, and to show more constructive initiative and less pettiness in committees than professors of mathematics, science, engineering and so on. In practice, if there is a difference, it does not seem to be significant.

The educational experiments which have been tried have taken the fairly obvious course of turning the usual school pattern upside-down, but I feel we have to go further than this. We have to ask ourselves what abilities or attitudes, in individuals or in groups, would be valuable, and (regarding the brain as a plastic learning machine) go ahead and invent ways of helping ourselves to learn them.

Some members of a peace-action group were discussing with me the dilemma of efficiency versus democracy. They wished to make decisions by consensus, but they also sometimes had to make them quickly. I suggested that this was a matter of a group

maturation, or learning process, and that it could perhaps be speeded up by "exercises." I wrote the attached paper to try to explain what I meant, and I am sending a copy to you as a (probably clumsy) example of what I feel the Humanities should be aiming at.

At present we are thrown into group and individual conflict situations, where the tension is heightened because we know intellectually what mature and effective behaviour would look like if we saw it, but we have had no practice in developing the necessary intellectual-emotional skills and "muscles." So, as individuals and as groups we avoid or suppress conflicts or else fight destructively, instead of learning how to resolve and integrate them. I feel we should be devising ways by which individuals and groups could acquire "virtues" for themselves (using a "teacher" if necessary) in a natural process of exercise and growth. (After all, most of our destructive defensive reactions are "learned.") I feel "the Humanities" should be leading the way.

The "attached paper" is a fairly formidable (26-page) attempt to explore the dynamics of "the humanizing process" in informal group activity. Here Mr. Carpendale proceeds from an assumption often made by MANAS editors—sometimes by reference to Andrea Caffi, Nicola Chiaromonte and Dwight Macdonald—that political and social action needs to be reduced to a modest, unpretentious, almost person-to-person scale. In other words, the small group, whether formed to do a specific task within the larger community, or simply to pursue clarifying discussion, allows the individual to separate himself from conflicting, confusing, and often misleading, run-of-the-mill statements of contemporary issues. Education for democracy needs to be recognized as requiring a great deal more than "picking sides" on any of the issues of the day. Unless a man knows what *he* feels or thinks, and believes that fulfillment of his capacities as a human being obligates him to learn how to "speak the utmost syllable of his conviction," he is rather like a pawn in a vast game of propaganda campaigns. Paradoxically, however, it is apparent that the individual needs free and vital interchange with others; he needs contact with a group or groups in order to refine and perhaps to transform his initial perspective. When this is recognized, the constructive value of intelligent controversy becomes

obvious. Mr. Carpendale's theory of individual growth through openminded participation in an ideative social interchange includes these considerations:

Making decisions by consensus, if the group is to remain together, involves either the suppression of individual needs or a determined effort to get to the root of individual disagreements and to try to find integrating solutions. Either of these conditions imposes great strains on the cohesion of the group, and I would suggest that it is only when strong cohesive forces exist that there is likely to be sufficient confidence in the group to face up to differences constructively, and avoid the suppression of individuality.

Questions to help judge the social age of a group and its communication system, whether it is a committee, a political party rally, a newspaper or radio-programme, or a clique of school-girls on the play-ground would be:

Too much of the communication is focussed on internal matters only, and how much of it is concerned with other groups and society in general?

When it does concern itself with the social environment (the action, goals, and policies of other groups), to what extent does it (a) avoid divisive or controversial matters? (b) focus on divisive matters *negatively*, inciting to anger or contempt? (c) treat divisive or controversial matters *positively*, refusing to be bullied, cheated, or exploited, but still considering the needs and views of others in searching for mutually satisfactory long term solutions.

This general view, which seems to characterize the attitudes of many MANAS subscribers, is continually finding new avenues of expression. The small experimental colleges, such programs as the "Contemporary Moral Issues" seminars sponsored by leading universities (see MANAS, Aug. 4), and "peace-action" groups, etc., are now being matched by the protest movements with what has been called the "teach-in," begun in Washington, D.C. Arnold Kaufman (*Nation*, June 21) describes the teach-in effort as a "new force for the times." He explains that teach-ins involve a great deal more than opposition, for instance, to the administration's foreign policy, despite the fact that they are focussed at present upon aspects of the Vietnamese disorder.

The teach-in sponsors are chiefly men in academic life, possessing reputations sufficient to make them reasonably secure from vilification—Dr. Kaufman himself being a typical example as associate professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. The teach-ins embody the conviction that the "academics" have a clear obligation to set the pace for responsible criticism of U.S. policy. Dr. Kaufman writes:

Democracy requires dissent. Dissent requires an effective and courageous opposition to government policy. It is a reflection of the weakness of the American system that effective opposition has not been adequately voiced in our legislative assemblies. It is a reflection of the basic strength and adaptability of the system that substitutes for this lack are being provided by members of the academic community. . .

Perhaps we are witnessing the death throes of McCarthyism. The man has been dead for almost ten years, but his spirit continues to frighten people and contaminate intelligence. Now, the main custodians of human intellect and its works in a society such as ours—the scholars and the teachers—are counter-attacking. The teach-in movement is part of their effort to strengthen institutions without which freedom of inquiry and integrity of commitment cannot be preserved.

Such undertakings, it is clear, raise philosophy to the role of a vital human activity. A short passage from Theodore Brameld's *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective* (Dryden Press, 1955) is here, we think, quite pertinent:

It is necessary to find a way whereby culture and the educational processes within it can be effectively examined and interpreted. This, we believe, is the chief role of philosophy. For philosophy is most properly defined as the effort of any culture to become conscious of itself—to face honestly and stubbornly its own weaknesses as well as strengths, failures as well as achievements, vices as well as virtues. Contradicting the common notion that philosophy at its purest is an aloof, intellectual discipline unsullied by either the miseries or the joys of everyday life, it is the supreme instrument man has fashioned by which, through the ages, he comes to terms with himself as he struggles to organize his existence within culture.

## *FRONTIERS*

### For Any Human Being, Anywhere

I WILL mention a few things that have bothered me lately.

(1) The suicide of Alice Herz. Although I did not know her, Virginia Naeve's letter made her sincerity and self-sacrifice clear and real. Yet I cannot help wondering—it seems strange to me to commit against one's self an act which, if done to another person, we would denounce. How can we further the things we believe in by behaving cruelly to anyone, including ourselves? How can we hope for decency between all people if we are ruthless with ourselves?

Of course, it may be an interesting thought, since we must die anyway, to make one's death significant. To make dying stand for something, having purpose and effect, rather than being the chance result of simply wearing out or catching cold. Perhaps death can be in character, planned, as are other phases of life. And as one gets older, perhaps there is the feeling that one has little left to put into life, and that dying well is the last thing left.

Logical—but I am not quite convinced. Somehow I go on believing that precisely because death, destruction and dehumanization are all around us, we need to be more human, more feeling, more rational, more decent in each moment of life, small and large—and more alive. As for the effectiveness of these suicides of protest: those of us who already agree with Alice Herz are shocked and saddened. If others hear of it, I am afraid that on the whole they would discount it as an action of someone odd or crazy. Or would the message sink in?

Certainly one of the most difficult questions I have encountered is how to live one's life as well as one can, raising children as whole and healthy human beings—and yet not find one's self in an oasis of self and family. There is of course a need for a snug (but not smug) calm center within the world, but not negating it—for a haven, not an ivory tower. It often plagues me to realize the discrepancy between what we have and aim for in our personal worlds and the conditions under which millions of other human

beings live. There are of course many ways of meeting this dilemma (including turning one's back on it). But certain things do not seem helpful: feeling guilty because one seems nearer to the "good life" which one wants for everyone; destroying one's life as a protest against the evil in the world; or being so overwhelmed by the futility and horror of life that one can neither enjoy one's brief moment of being alive nor be of help to anyone else.

(2) The other evening I saw an unfinished film of Andrey Munck's, *The Passenger*. Set in Auschwitz, there is a scene of long lines of children, in their poor overcoats, like any school full of children in any poor neighborhood, walking down wide stairs into an underground building while an SS man in gas mask and rubber gloves dumps cans of chemicals into ducts in the roof. . . . One little girl stops to pet the German police dog held tightly by a young SS guard. He smiles at her for a moment and then, recalling himself, straightens up, frowns grimly, stares straight ahead.

I was deeply troubled all day. Running through my mind was the comment of a friend when he showed us his new Mercedes: "I never thought I'd own a German car. But they're made so damn beautifully. The motor is so quiet sometimes I think it's off. Look at how this door shuts!" Then, as an afterthought, "But of course, the doors at Auschwitz must have shut efficiently, too."

That night I dreamed that I was talking to a German man and saying, "I can hardly believe that you and I are friends, that I'm walking here with you. I *think* that it's right, but I never expected to be able to get over my *feeling* of hatred and my desire to have the punishment fit the crime, and my wish never to be reminded. . . ."

For if there is any way to negate all that horror and evil, any way to break out of the deadly pattern of hate and retribution, we must find it. We cannot undo it—we cannot forget it—we cannot forgive it. Perhaps we can learn to avoid it. We can at least try to save the future. The only way I see to negate it is to be as much the opposite as we can. Beginning with ourselves and people we touch and working out from there, to make life as good and whole as we

can, as full of decency and love and friendliness as possible, realistically and honestly.

(3) If there is any message humanity needs it would seem to be: not to automatically give obedience to local authority, but to obey an inner voice, a higher voice. Not to obey orders blindly, not even "to keep up with the Jones's" blindly. The idea of another law, another authority, another responsibility is of course not the property of any one group. In our own country, John Brown, Emerson and Thoreau, for example, have carried the same message. But perhaps a primitive Semitic tribe, long ago, bullied and cajoled by leaders and prophets, as a group recognized and symbolized this ethic. I had always wondered about the phrase, "the Chosen People," and it rather annoyed me. It seemed presumptuous, even ridiculous. Chosen for what?

But if one man, along with all the others in human history, one we now call Jesus, died keeping this message alive, doesn't that make all—Christian and Jew alike—"chosen people"? With this prime responsibility, to recognize for our generation this message—that any human being anywhere and always must ask himself what *he* is doing. . . . A policeman in Los Angeles or Alabama or New York—a scientist in Oak Ridge—an advertising man writing copy to sell cigarettes—a mother with a child. . . .

If there is anything like a Covenant with God, is it not a pact to be true to His word, to life's word—remembering we are human beings, not animals to accept blinders on our eyes, on our conscience? Men converted the prophetic insight into organized religion, attempting to make viable for future generations a concept of man as human (divine), a concept so easily forgotten as need, profit, status and power fill a community's consciousness, so that fear, greed, competitiveness, callousness, and indifference take over. In so doing, the original insight is buried, becoming empty words for most, and what has been done in the name of religion is as evil as anything done in the name of any other social institution. But the spark of life and truth was there once. Where is it now? What are life and truth for us today? Perhaps we can find them again.

How, I can't imagine, since the ever vaster numbers of human beings in the world make it ever more difficult to function in terms of each individual—and yet that seems to be the only meaningful way. Perhaps religion, like everything else? is and must be evolving. What we know so far is awkward and tentative. The needs and feelings remain—new forms will develop to meet them.

Perhaps it is as silly to logically rule out God as it is to require literal belief in Him. Without our gods, where are we? If our sense of causation is more objective, are we truly satisfied? If our art concerns itself with secular images, is it really a needed, vital part of our life? What is our shared experience, beyond the things we own or aspire to own? A scientist or mathematician uses *x* and *y* and many other constructs I don't begin to understand in order to concretize processes, in order to manipulate and develop theory. Perhaps the concept of God serves this same purpose, helping to externalize the human psyche, making it possible to work with stone, paint, sound, words—to make visible the invisible to make audible the inaudible.

It hardly matters what meaning you give the word God, or, if you prefer, another word. There *are* values and truths. We *do* know. Whom do we think we fool? We *are* our brother's keepers, we *are* our own keepers.

Alice Goldring

Mexico City