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HEROISM: THE LOST DIMENSION

THE proprietors of the big institutions of modern technological civilization are not without their own kind of psychological insight. Recently an analyst of public affairs took note of the fact that the Soviet Minister of Defense and certain Soviet military leaders are troubled by literary trends in their country. Russian artists and writers, they charged, "were concentrating on 'abstract humanism' and the horrors of war, and were not emphasizing enough of war's heroic and romantic aspects."

The problem is obviously one of the management of morale, and is by no means limited to the Soviet Union. Wherever you turn, you find administrators struggling with this lack of the proper spirit. One evidence is in the recent appointment of a committee to seek out and define "goals" for the United States; or, looking back a generation, you can recall an American psychologist envying the militant nationalism aroused by the pageantry of the Nazi Party rallies of the 1930's. The publishers of mass magazines are always sensitive to the need for positive or "on-going" emotional drive, and aggressively condemn novelists whose work reflects "defeatism" or "decadence" and "despair." Readers are continuously instructed by journalistic surveys of the "greatness" going on all about them. In the Paris-published *Réalité* for September, for example, the institutional heavens of technology are made to open wide by a group of articles which display the overwhelming promise of science for the future. A story on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "School for the Year 2000," is headed, "We're Learning to Solve Problems that Don't Exist Yet."

Ironically, a secondary theme of this account of modern miracles reveals how few of the bright young men of our time are bright enough to make it at MIT. A twenty-four-year-old working on his doctorate in electricity remarked: "Out of six thousand applicants every year, they only accept nine hundred." He added: "Nine hundred of us started in electricity, and only one hundred and seventy-five finished." We need not worry about this, however, since our Saving Principle, Competition, is at work. "Here, you see it's the class average that counts. So every student is afraid that the other fellow is working harder than he is."

The ones that do make it have a great future before them:

> MIT professors all have ties with industry, either as consultants to large firms or government agencies (the new dean of the School of Science, Jerome Weisner, was scientific adviser to President Kennedy) or as the heads of their own companies like Harold E. Edgerton, Professor of Electronic Light Measurements, who manufactures a type of electronic flash lamp.
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> MIT goes all out to develop a student's initiative. At first he is given a simple problem and asked to handle it himself, often down to the construction of the apparatus he needs. . . . he opens his mouth only to talk about plasma physics or problems of apparatus, and his eyes are red from long hours in the library where he must endlessly seek references and documentation. What is more, he wears a brass beaver ring on his left hand . . . and bears no resemblance to the athletic, easygoing student who will smile wistfully all his life when he looks back on his college years.

Another *Réalité* article describes specially trained people who are learning to live forty-five feet under water for weeks at a time, preparing the skills that will be needed for "a great undersea adventure." There, we are told, in "that liquid element from which his remote biological ancestors emerged," man may perhaps "find a renewal of all his sources of inspiration." *Wow!*

Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome gets a roseate color treatment and a longer story shows what is happening to the architectural profile of Park Avenue in New York. The *Réalité* editors are sophisticated enough to disarm serious criticism with casual reference, and make their point anyway: "Park Avenue's new buildings are controversial and critics

accuse the builders of lacking imagination and neglecting the human factor. Yet to the rest of the world Park Avenue represents a kind of fairyland future come true."

There are other stories telling about other miracles, but enough is enough. We've got our heroes, all right, and they're lined up there on the horizons of tomorrow, standing like cardboard cut-outs in postures of Progress so that we can watch them do all those great things—*for us.* You just have to buy a magazine. Who needs knights in armour?

The whole performance is artificial, of course, from any human point of view. But it exhibits incredible skills. And it looks so *real.* Why shouldn't it? We're used to watching the play, instead of taking part. We can always "read all about it." Nearly all our crucial experiences, including "religious" experiences, are at second hand. We've had surrogate saviors and heroes for thousands of years. But after all, how could *we* do those wonderful things? Jesus was the Son of God; and the boys at MIT are just too smart. We'll get carried along, somehow, as usual.

Now the difficulty with this arrangement, although it has worked, if somewhat imperfectly, during much of the observable past, is that its psychological and cultural effects are in direct contradiction to the democratic theory of society and of human beings. When the heroes are all some kind of expert, a great mass of docile conformists is needed to be directed by the higher echelons of the technological and managerial elite. The conformists have to be given a wide range of pseudo-decisions to make, and feelings of "participation" must be produced in them by means of the mass communications systems available to the managers.

Worst of all is the fact that the hero-image is of a specialist, not a *man*. This fixates the ideal in terms of a specialist-created and specialist-dominated society, and since such a society is bound to develop all its excellences in forms that depend upon elaborate and highly specialized institutions, the social system tends to lose flexibility and in time becomes incapable of reversing any of its directions. In terms of basic philosophy, it *can't* change; the investment in the psychological *states quo* has become too great.

On the other hand, with the growth of the technological and rigidly institutional society, there also develops that awful emptiness in people, making their leaders demand stronger emotional identification with the needs and objectives of the total political-technological organization. And you get artists and writers who revolt, who protest the emptiness by showing that they couldn't care less about the fortunes of the Big Corporation. Actually, such rebels are the only remaining vindicators of the democratic philosophy, which at root is a claim that a potential "hero" awaits his opportunities inside every human being. They see that institutional society inevitably puts the individual in some kind of niche and keeps him there. He is told that a proper patriotism and an appropriate "spiritual" outlook will make him think like the managers of the society, and if he fails in this, then his mother and father, his church and community, are all at fault, or he has been perverted by some subversive doctrine that has crept into the public schools.

The fact is that people do need an opportunity to think for themselves; they *are* potential heroes; and the exciting discovery of the eighteenth century was not just another political theory, but a deep and unforgettable insight concerning the nature of Man. That is why the discovery made a Revolution. Human beings cannot grow into fulfillment when their lives are managed by institutions guided by specialists who, more easily than anyone else, go off the track. The institutions eventually relate only to fragments and subdivisions of man, and can then go on functioning only by fragmenting and subdividing him. These are some of the dread consequences of allowing specialized managers to develop the social forms of our existence into enormous nation-states. And because of the impressive physical plant of these organizations, and their far-reaching control over life and welfare, *their* health and survival become the only important things for men who regard themselves as public-spirited servants of the common good.

As these changes take place, observant men recognize what is happening. They object. These are men in whom the vision of the eighteenth century will not die, and who see, perhaps, more deeply than their fellows into the profound psychological realities of human nature. They sense the truth that made the Declaration of Independence of the United States far more than a political document, and they turn that truth into the currency of their lives. They fight against the images which popularize an anti-human reality. They argue for the open society in which men can be truly human, and will not settle for anything else. They know that scope for freedom needs individual heroism. One such man, Ralph Waldo Emerson; wrote in 1838:

> Thus always we are daunted by appearances; not seeing that their whole value lies at bottom in a state of mind. It *is* really a thought that built this portentous war establishment, and a thought shall also melt it away. Every nation and every man instantly surround themselves with a material apparatus which exactly corresponds to their moral state, or their state of thought. Observe how every truth and every error, each a *thought* of some man's mind, clothes itself with societies, houses, cities, language, ceremonies, newspapers. Observe the ideas of the present day—orthodoxy, skepticism, missions, popular education, temperance, anti-masonry, anti-slavery; see how each of these abstractions has embodied itself in an imposing apparatus in the community; and how timber, brick, lime and stone have flown into convenient shape, obedient to the master idea in the minds of many persons. . . .
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> We surround ourselves, according to our freedom and our ability, with true images of ourselves in things, whether it be ships or books or cannon or churches. The standing army, the arsenal, the camp and the gibbet do not appertain to man. They serve only as an index to show where man is now; what a bad, ungoverned temper he has; what an ugly neighbor he is; how his affections halt; how low his hope lies. He who loves the bristle of bayonets only sees in their glitter what beforehand he feels in his heart. It is avarice and hatred, it is that quivering lip, that cold, hating eye, which built magazines and powder houses.
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> It follows of course that the least change in the man will change his circumstances; the least enlargement of his ideas, the least mitigation of his feelings in respect to other men; if, for example, he could be inspired with a tender kindness to the souls of men, and should come to feel that every man was another self with whom he might come to join, as left hand works with right. Every degree of ascendancy of this feeling would cause the most striking changes of external things: the tents would be struck, the men-of-war would rot ashore, the arms rust; the cannon would become streetposts; the pikes, a fisher's harpoon; the marching regiment would be a caravan of emigrants, *peaceful* pioneers at the fountains of the Wabash and the Missouri. And so it must and will be. . . .

As you read the foregoing, two things occur. You sense the psychological truth of what Emerson is saying, and also the sociological truth, but you find these truths difficult to cleave to. You wonder if it is not now too late. Or if some form of persuasion not used by the Concord sage shouldn't be added to his argument.

There is also the question of the meaning of the "hero" and on what recognition of the heroic act depends. In some sense the hero always breaks out of the mold of ordinary behavior. He turns against the commonplace, the accepted, and moves in perilous ways toward an end that other men habitually regard as unattainable. Yet, on the other hand, heroic behavior cannot be an absolute novelty. It somehow speaks to the dreamer and the visionary in other men. Heroism takes the wispy substance of their ineffectual longings and turns it into the stuff of human possibility. Thus heroism has need of a cultural context of transcendent hopes, in order to be the inspiration we expect it to be, instead of some splendid but fruitless folly. It requires an inner logic and some kind of rationale.

In Emerson's time, it still seemed possible—at least to him—that men aroused to see the evil in such half-grown institutions of the nineteenth century might turn their thoughts to other ways and ends. He spoke with great clarity against the grain of the dominant human activities of that time, but then there was no warning desperation in the air. His argument had only the sweet reasonableness of the truth that was in it. His gentleness hid his subversion.

Today things are different. On the negative side, they are different by presenting a far more daunting appearance. The institutional façades are

not only all around us; they are *inside* us, too. "The people," as Marcuse says, "recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment." We may have made the world around us, as Emerson says, but the resulting civilization, as Marcuse says, "transforms the object world into an extension of man's mind and body." People for whom this has happened would find it difficult to *hear* Emerson at all.

So the question arises: What sort of metaphysical clothing would the modern hero wear, in order to be recognized today? What bells can he hope to set ringing? Is there yet any "common denominator" of unfulfilled human longing in terms of which the hero may be understood and honored in our time?

The question, doubtless, is somewhat premature. At any rate, we cannot answer it here, even though we may lose some friends from failing to have ready examples of the heroic in human behavior. But what we are talking about is the quality of the *epic* in human attitudes and acts, and this cannot be produced by any single man, nor even by a handful, although both individuals and groups may set going currents which in time swell into a wave of epic proportions. The hero, in this sense, is the product of the devoted element in the entire human community; and before he can appear, a time and a place must be created for him.

But to say this is to use the language of the past. We have reverted, from habit, to the language of the specialist culture, since the hero is also a specialist—a specialist in being human, fully human. He is the *beau ideal* of mankind. And we have already said that the genius of our immediate past lies in rejecting the specialists and honoring what makes all men alike, not what sets them apart. So it is a quality in man that we are seeking, and hoping to foster, and not a few distinguished embodiments of that quality, although we might get them, too.

In these terms, the symptoms are good. The Civil Rights movement has admirable leaders, but its heroes are the *rank and file.* So also with the activist pacifists. Their demonstrations, peace walks, acts of civil disobedience, and frequent imprisonments bring recognition of the spirit of indomitable purpose which animates them all. The framing sense of enlarging meaning in what they do may be hidden to the great majority; its epic promise may have only subjective reality, and for the very few; indeed, you might propose that the culture as a whole has not yet done the thinking which would entitle it to *recognize* heroes of any sort; and yet the threads of heroic resolve are in many places being carried to and fro by living shuttles, and the fabric of a better life may be gaining its barest beginnings before our eyes.

How can we get at the average man's lack of the sense of the dramatic in his own life? At the absence of "commitment" and the failure to pursue high ends? The familiar response to such questions is almost always in terms of exhortation. People *preach* to us about what we *ought* to do. But the central psychological fact of heroic behavior is that it arises from spontaneous longings and not from any burdening sense of "ought." The oughts have their place in life, but they cannot alone stir men to heroism. And if the sole appeal for the improvement of human behavior is couched in "oughts," the result may well be men of diminishing stature. A note in a recent paper by Eugene T. Gendlin, "A Theory of Personality Change," has pertinence here. Dr.Gendlin remarks:

> It seems quite striking and universal that we feel guilt, shame, and badness, *instead* of feeling that concerning which we feel shame, guilt, badness. It is almost as if these emotions themselves preclude our feeling what it all is to us—not so much because they are so unpleasant, as because they skip the point at which we might complete, symbolize, respond or attend to that which we centrally feel. . . . It is like an animal whose response to hunger is to bite itself in the leg. Instead of responding with a behavior which in some way "symbolizes" the hunger and carries forward the organismic digestion process, such an animal would be most aware of the pain in its leg and would behave accordingly.

In short, men do not need to be made to feel guilt, shame, and badness, by being told what they *ought* to be doing. They need rather to begin to think of themselves as capable of doing what they already *know* they ought to be doing.

The Big Institutions of society are not bad because they are big, or certainly not for this reason alone. They are bad because they have become big in a context of human attitudes which encourage men to think they are helpless in the face of such bigness. It is a defeat of all the sound intuitions of a human being for him to think that in order to live a good life he must relate harmoniously with the necessities of these institutions.

What we are saying, we suppose, is that the forms of alienation which find expression in the struggle for racial justice and against war do not go deep enough; or, perhaps they go deep enough for the people working in these movements, but do not communicate with sufficient force and clarity to people who are simply bewildered and dissatisfied, and not ready to question themselves.

One theory of explanation for this general condition would be that the democratic myth—our over-arching concept of meaning—has two aspects, and that we have developed only one of them. We have told ourselves the importance of joining together to create the conditions of a good life for all, and we have worked very hard at this. But there is also the idea of individual self-realization and fulfillment, and we have interpreted this almost entirely in terms of enjoyment, of getting the benefits of the prosperity we have jointly produced. In short, we have mistaken getting for becoming, acquisition for growth. We have let the processes natural to the development of plant and institutions replace the processes natural to human beings. And we have "sold" ourselves on the idea that these outward achievements do not merely symbolize our human quality, but actually *constitute* that quality. Naturally enough, this mistake has provided a great field of activity for the moralists, who can now denounce our moral flabbiness, condemn our desertion of spiritual traditions, and point to our failure to practice the sturdy virtues of the past—and the moralists make all these speeches without ever mentioning the real trouble, which was and is in our idea of ourselves.

The ill goes deep. There is a sense in which recovery from it will have to be spontaneous. For what will make a man respond *heroically* to the alienation he feels from all degrading or ineffectual ideas about himself? And how bad must be the consequences of these ideas, in the distortions and confinements of grossly compensating institutions, before he rises up against them in revolt? And when he does, what will he do? How will he behave, in a world ostensibly controlled almost completely by these institutions?

He may have at first no "concrete" objectives, yet the track of his behavior will be revolutionary in the extreme. He will have to invent ways of acting as a human being in all that he does. And at first, surely, those "ways" will be very hard to define. He will not destroy, but simply refuse to be *used*. And since machines and goods, institutions and organizations are the creations of men, they can be made to respond to heroic determination.

What is wanted is a clear, unequivocal expression of the role of the human being—over and over again. We do not have any language for this as yet. We have a lot of words, a lot of traditions, but no language for speaking of this role in terms that we can understand—in terms of the mode of a heroic life in the twentieth century. To find that language, to give it voice, to show the action it proposes, at the level of the universal longings of the best that is in all men—this is assignment enough for the potential heroes of the remaining years of the twentieth century.

REVIEW
COLIN WILSON'S NEW LOOK AT HUMANISM

IN *The Outsiders* (Houghton Mifflin, 1956), one of England's highly publicized "angry young men" devoted considerable space to a criticism of "Humanism," and seemed to be making this criticism on behalf of a revitalized religious approach to "human values." Take for instance these passages:

> Humanism is only another name for spiritual laziness or a vague half-creed adopted by men of science and logicians whose heads are too occupied with the world of mathematics and physics to worry about religious categories. For such men, it is only necessary to make the outlines and derivations of these categories clear and graspable. They cannot be expected to sort out all the rubbish left over from the Renaissance. That is the concern of men who are deeply enough touched by religious issues to get to work with a pick and shovel. . . .
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> If a "new religious age" is to be born before our civilization destroys itself, it may require an intellectual effort of gestation that will involve the whole civilized world.
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> There are still many difficulties that cannot be touched on here. The problem for the "civilization" is the adoption of a religious attitude that can be assimilated as *objectively* as the headlines of last Sunday's newspapers. But the problem for the individual always will be the opposite of this, the conscious striving *not* to limit the amount of experience seen and touched; the intolerable struggle to expose the sensitive areas of being to what may possibly hurt them; the attempt to see as a whole, although the instinct of self-preservation fights against the pain of the internal widening, and all the impulses of spiritual laziness build into waves of sleep with every new effort. The individual begins that long effort as an Outsider; he may finish it as a saint.

In *The Stature of Man* (Houghton Mifflin, 1959), however, we find a redefinition of Humanism similar to that being supplied by the "third force" psychologists. Not a deeper and revised understanding of the religious category, but a series of self-discoveries must, on Wilson's present view, generate the highest in human understanding. And when he talks about the "hero" instead of the saint, he is apparently seeking that synthesis between the noblest in Humanism and what is most real in religious symbolism. In the concluding chapter of *The Stature of Man,* he writes:

> The hero's problem is to turn inward, *and then outward* again. . . . The purpose of turning inward is to discover one's freedom. All men are supplied by a power house of will and subconscious drive, but very few are aware of anything but the need to keep alive. It is hardly surprising that most men think of their motives in terms of everyday necessities. Considering from this point of view, all life is seen as an ascending hierarchy of mechanisms, beginning with the need to eat and breathe, and developing to levels of ambition, self-assertion (will to power), and so on. This is to hold the problem upside down, but it makes very little difference so long as men are committed to some objective purpose. It is also the unheroic hypothesis. But confronted by any man with an inborn sense of purpose, it appears as nausea, a denial of life and freedom. The highest compliment Shakespeare's Antony could pay Brutus was: "This was a man." Nietzsche or Sartre would retort that only insofar as he was unaware of his freedom was he a man, insofar as he was free, he was not anything but potentiality of will and purpose.

The "core" or "peak" experience must be the root of inspiration for the individual who is to discover his own heroic proportions. An improvement of our understanding of the Christian tradition and its reinterpretation will not suffice—not if we consider that the whole approach of doctrine is inadequate for an education which liberates. It is this perception which suggests the subtle transition between Mr. Wilson's emphasis in *The Outsider* and in *The Stature of Man.* The best example of the change occurs in the chapter titled "A Postscript":

> The chief necessity of our age is to dare to be inner-directed. This is not easy. Behind us is the rise of fascism, the extermination of millions of Jews, the disappearance of the old order; we live in a world of constant political tension, with a permanent threat of world communism, and a world in which all writers would be expected to be grateful for state supervision. It is no longer a mere figure of rhetoric to say that

> man's freedom is being destroyed every day. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that men are losing their sense of interior certainty and becoming more other-directed. Yet it is impossible for man to regain his power over his situation without turning away from the immediacy of his experience and concentrating upon his intuitions of his own value. This turning away is not a form of escapism; it is only the first step in regaining detachment and, eventually, the control that comes with detachment. The solution lies in a deepening of subjectivity, and an analysis of the problems that possesses the confidence of subjectivity. The claptrap about commitment must be rejected without compunction. Commitment cannot be imposed as a duty; its impulse originates in self-belief. The impulse that for four centuries has expressed itself in scientific discovery must be redirected.
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> The responsibility of literature in the twentieth century becomes appallingly clear: to illuminate man's freedom.

At this point it seems not far amiss to repeat something from Aristotle, who here sounds more like his teacher, Plato, than he usually does. "We must not obey," he said, "those who urge us, because we are human and mortal, to think human and mortal thoughts; in so far as we may we should practice immortality, and omit no effort to live in accordance with the best that is in us." Is this sentiment really so different from what Mr. Wilson is saying? Somewhat depending upon what one means by "immortality," of course, but not altogether so. For immortality may be taken to stand for some unique capacity for stability, a kind of "permanence," in the human soul—something which is the core of individuality and therefore the root of man's capacity to seek the region of the hero—where, whatever his mistakes, he recognizes them as his own, learns from them, and proceeds towards a conquest of his other forms of short-sightedness. He is free simply from inward acknowledgement of the truth that *he* is what Plato called the soul—a "self-moving unit."

COMMENTARY
WHERE IS THE DRAGON?

ANYONE who has been at all attentive to the popular arts during the past thirty or forty years is well aware that, in the movies for example, the handling of violence and ugliness, as in war and gangster films, and of situations portraying corruption, betrayal, and cultural decay, is accomplished with notable skill and often with great artistic fidelity. These are familiar levels of experience. We easily recognize phonyness and fakery. Our rich stores of corruption are daily catalogued in the papers, which also supply endless case histories of violence, covering both individuals and groups. We know the texture and grain of evil. But what about good?

It is only when a writer or an artist feels the impulse to do something with an upward and onward thrust that trouble begins. Where will he get his material? He can't use the clichés, yet what else is there? You might be able to turn out a happy fable, such as William Saroyan once produced, or do something regional with social justice, like Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*, but a writer needs more than social themes. The man who would write affirmatively, these days, must find a Pierian spring which brings up inspiration from artesian depths. He has to get behind the issues which look as though they might be resolved by vigorous political morality and intelligence—back to matters which explain, first of all, why the heroic is so difficult to give an account of in our time.

Here is one diagnosis—good, but not going deep enough—composed by an American editor who now lives in England:

> Whenever I come back to America I feel homesick. Not everywhere and all the time—but here and there, and in general. I also feel alarm and disgust: at American complacency which takes for granted the bad, expensive food, the insensate waste, the swollen, third-rate newspapers, the Balkan inefficiency of the postal service, the pig-pen squalor of public transport, the patterned ugliness of the towns, the senseless desecration of the countryside, the inconveniences and discomforts of city life—none of which Americans notice, or notice with only half an eye, because they are used to all these things or because they consider them necessary concomitants to "expansion," the meek and hideous handmaidens to the Gross National Product. Gross is the word for it. . . . I no longer share my fellow countrymen's faith that America is the hope of the world, if there is any hope for the world I don't think it will be contained within the boundaries of a nation.
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> My feeling about America is more like helpless and hopeless love: an unreasonable emotion that goes against the probabilities and the evidence. I think that America, like the rest of the world (which, as an American, I care less about), is uncontrollably on the wrong track. I believe that there are millions of kindly, well-meaning and intelligent Americans, but millions more are neither kindly, well-meaning nor intelligent and that these corrupt citizens have become the majority and the source of power for the blundering bureaucracies that, more mindless than computers, shape our destinies. As a result, the United States presents to the world an image (in Edmund Wilson's words) that is "self-intoxicated, homicidal and menacing."
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> I admit the existence of the image but I desperately deny that it fairly pictures the reality. As an American I must deny it, or cease to be an American. (T. S. Matthews, in the Amer*ican Scholar*, Autumn, 1964.)

Hardly by coincidence, two articles in this week's MANAS are concerned with the hero. Well, where is the evil beast in the picture assembled by Mr. Mattews, which our heroes, if we had any, might seek out? What is the germ of our infection, or the wicked formula or spell which has such unlovely and frightening effects? If we had reliable answers to these questions, we might soon develop heroes in plenty. Most people have to *see* the dragon before they will gird up their loins for heroic action. And they have to find its lair before any slaying can begin. Mapping its ugly track is not enough.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION AND RELIGION

FROM what might easily have had the title, "Read it and Weep," we reproduce a few sentences which appeared in a recent Los Angeles *Times* column (June 29) by California's Superintendent of Schools, Max Rafferty. Always dependable for backward-looking views, Mr. Rafferty here speaks staunch words on behalf of God in the schools:

> There is a trend running throughout the land which I mistrust and fear. A whole series of Supreme Court decisions starting with the Vashti McCollum case back in the '30's and with obviously more to come in the not-too-distant future, point in one direction, and that is toward a time when the very mention of God will be forbidden in the nation's schools. . . .
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> There is no separating religion and education, any more than there can be the separation of Siamese twins joined by vital organs.
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> True, our highest court has said nothing yet to imperil these great building blocks of education. But a trend is running like a river underground which every now and then foams ominously into view. In a time when national morals are at a record low, when the threat of disaster hangs over the whole land, when our juvenile crime rate has become an object of shuddering horror to the rest of the civilized world, it seems to me that we need more spiritual and moral values in our schools, not fewer.

Well now, this Department has been studying and promoting an entirely different tradition respecting "values" in a democracy. To say that "there are no spiritual values without God" is to say that no man who fails to profess belief in deity as a Being can have any values worthy of respect. What Erich Fromm calls an "authoritarian God," moreover, is always an encouragement to authoritarian ways of dealing with human beings—in the home, in the schools, and in social relationships. A truly "humanitarian" God, conversely, can have no formal definition, since such a God must represent spiritual aspiration wherever it exists—regardless of nation, background of "faith," etc. There is a great deal of truth in Upton Sinclair's insistence that "human beings are often nobler than the Gods they worship," but in a democracy religious education should allow Gods, as well as men, to become nobler as wisdom and compassion grow.

We have recently quoted from A. H. Maslow's paper on the relationship between "peak-experiences" and religions as we know them. In a companion paper titled "Organizational Dangers to Transcendent Experiences," Dr. Maslow gives further justification of the Supreme Court ruling against religious indoctrination in the schools, and in the following passage shows why remarks such as those of Mr. Rafferty are actually in opposition to authentic religious experience:

> It has sometimes seemed to me as I interviewed "nontheistic-religious people" that they had *more* religious (or transcendent) experiences than conventionally religious people. Partly this may have been that they were more often "serious" about values, ethics, life-philosophy, having had to struggle away from conventional beliefs and having had to create individually some beliefs for themselves, i.e., they had to work at it instead of resting comfortably and thoughtlessly in their heritage.
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> The reason I now bring up this impression (which may or may not be validated, may or may not be simply a sampling-error, etc.) is that it brought me to the realization that for *most* people a conventional religion, while strongly "religionizing" one part of life, thereby also strongly "de-religionizes" the rest of life. The experiences of the holy, the sacred, the divine, of awe, of creatureliness, of surrender, of mystery, of piety, thanksgiving, gratitude, self-dedication, etc., etc., if they happen at all, tend to be confined to a single day of the week to happen under one roof only, of one kind of structure only, under certain triggering circumstances only, to rest heavily on the presence of certain traditional, powerful but intrinsically irrelevant stimuli, e.g., organ music, incense, chanting of a particular kind, certain regalia, and other arbitrary triggers. Being religious, or rather *feeling* religious under these ecclesiastical auspices, seems to absolve many (most?) people from the necessity or desire to feel these experiences at any other time. "Religionizing" only one part of life secularizes the rest of it.

> This is in contrast with my impression that "serious" people of all kinds tend to be able to "religionize" any part of life any day of the week, in any place, and under all sorts of circumstances, i.e., to be aware of Tillich's "dimension of depth." Of course, it would not occur to most "serious" people who are non-theists to put the label "religious experiences" on what they were feeling, or to use such words as holy, pious, sacred or the like. By my usage, however, they are often having "core-religious experiences" or transcendent experiences when they report having peak-experiences. In this sense, a sensitive, creative working artist I know, who calls himself an agnostic could be said to be having many "religious experiences," and I am sure that he would agree with me if I asked him about it.
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> Orthodox religion can easily mean de-sacralizing much of life. It can lead to dichotomizing life into transcendent and secular-profane, and can therefore compartmentalize and separate them temporarily, spatially, conceptually, and experientially. This is in clear contradiction to the actualities of the peak-experiences. It even contradicts the traditionally religious versions of mystic experience, not to mention the experiences of satori, of Nirvana, and other Eastern versions of peak and mystic experiences. All of these agree that the sacred and profane, the religious and secular are not separated from each other. Apparently it is one danger of the legalistic and organizational versions of religion that they may tend to suppress naturalistic peak, transcendent, mystical or other "core-religious" experiences and to make them *less* likely to occur, i.e., the degree of religious organization may correlate negatively with the frequency of "religious" experiences. Conventional religions may even be used as defenses against and resistances to the shaking experiences of transcendence.

Many a scientific-minded agnostic psychologist has been known to grant to religions and the churches the performance of a "stabilizing" function—for it appears that the man or woman who "believes" strongly in a well-defined religious outlook which demands high moral standards is protected from much confusion and hard knocks. "Attend the church of your choice" because "the family that prays together stays together" seems to often prove out. But it is also apparent that while this sort of formula works well for people of a certain temperament, it is inapplicable and meaningless to others, and only the most doctrinaire of the sectarians would maintain that these latter are by definition "inferior" in creativity, in their sense of responsibility, and in ethical standards.

What one is bound to dislike about the sectarian—whether Christian or any other kind—is his assumption that "spiritual" inspiration is restricted to those who share his particular belief, or one he is generous enough to approve. You can't have a proper democracy that way—at least not for the sort of people who understand the Bill of Rights. Dr. Maslow is not being "anti-religious" when he suggests that there are apt to be fewer genuine "peak-experiences" among the conventional religionists; he is simply stating in very direct terms that the content of real religion is universal, that it ties humans together in recognition of their common capacity for seeking transcendent values, instead of roping them off from one another.

FRONTIERS

Another "Failure of Nerve"?

IN an article in the September *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* Robert A. Levine, author of *The Arms Debate,* appeals to "liberals" to give greater attention to "the complexity of war and peace issues" and avoid succumbing to "the emotional appeals of simplistic peaceniks in order to counterbalance the simplists of the right." In this communication, titled "Open Letter from a Military Intellectual to a Sophisticated Liberal Leader," Mr. Levine is criticizing a *mood* rather than carefully thought-out positions and expressions. He is suggesting that people who claim to practice the disciplines of intellectuality have no right to indulge "simple emotional commitment to slogans." Specifically, he argues:

> It is shameful that self-styled liberals have been so concerned with attacking the whole defense establishment and the whole concept of military power that they have failed to swarm to the defense of Secretary McNamara in some of the recent controversies over civilian control. . . . Because the ranters fail to make distinctions among the different lines of thought followed by various denizens of the Pentagon, rantings about the *juggernant* which opposes all efforts toward peace tend to push *all* those who are knowledgeable about military questions toward the opposite pole. . . .
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> In the world as we know it, although some disarmament is both desirable and ultimately feasible, deterrence in some form is going to remain a portion of our policy for a long time (and should); and not only is it not immoral to discriminate among forms and objectives of deterrence, but the liberal-intellectual movement can play an important role in such discrimination—a role it has so far failed to play because of a distaste for the whole idea.

Mr. Levine believes that much of the confusion about national aims and the means to peace could be removed if liberals would adopt a more "hard-headed" stance and take stock of their own position by recognizing—

> finally, and most important, the very simple idea that the world is not very simple—that one's first reaction to the emotionally satisfying solution should not be emotional satisfaction, but suspicion—in other words that intellectuals should be intellectual.

A central plank in Mr. Levine's argument is that the intellectuals of a generation ago, while critical of national policies (President Roosevelt's New Deal), for the most part supported the general thrust of the Government's activities. The radicals were "highly critical," but they were "criticizing speed rather than direction of reform." Today, however, the very direction of administration foreign policies is questioned: "the criticisms have been of what is done as well as what is undone. . . ." Apparently, in Mr. Levine's view, this convicts the present liberal critics of intellectual irresponsibility, "emotionalism," and of behaving in ways that undermine realistic efforts toward peace.

One can certainly agree with Mr. Levine's judgment that "the world is not very simple"—but the moral to be drawn from this truism may not be precisely the conclusion he reaches. There is a considerable difference between the "rationalism" of the New Deal and that of deterrence theory. And the intuitive factors are enormously different. There is also the question of anticipated "limits" which may be reached. The worst that could happen from miscalculations of the New Deal was an over-extended Welfare State, with serious socio-political problems to be faced and dealt with by subsequent generations. These are small matters when compared with the prospect of a planet laid waste by nuclear war.

It is true enough that the opponents of deterrence theory have little of familiar political rationality and traditional statecraft on their side. For the most part, their capital is "moral" and the dynamics of their arguments draw heavily on revulsion. So, from a formal point of view, Mr. Levine may be quite correct. But he could also be absolutely wrong, although neither he nor his opponents will be able to offer "proofs" except after the fact. If, indeed, the substance of his underlying assumptions is in process of giving way, how could we know this, except from some

kind of clairvoyance that can anticipate changes in human attitudes and concepts of value which go far beyond the present structures and motivations in national policy?

It is possible to say, however, that the present mood of (apparent) over-simplified emotionalism to be found throughout the intellectual community may arise from exactly this kind of wondering. It may be just as appropriate to make this reading of the behavior of the intellectuals as to charge them with a "failure of nerve." From the viewpoint of the past, of course, it is a failure of nerve. But what is it, from the point of view of the future?

Mr. Levine thinks the neglect of the issues in paramilitary considerations could lead to the collapse of the center in "serious" thought about peace, and to delivery of the world into the hands of contestants who represent only "extremes" in policy—the "Peaceniks and simplists" versus the "Victory Now" boys. Again, he may be right in formal terms. But there is the additional possibility that another kind of "center" is needed—that the old one doesn't perform its balancing and stabilizing function any more because it cannot command the hopes of a large and growing segment of the intellectual community. What, then, might a new "center" be like? Nobody knows. This is an answer that Mr. Levine would probably find vastly irritating, but it is also an answer which at least acknowledges the fact of far-reaching change in the present and recognizes the hardly debatable shrinkage of the rational ground on which Mr. Levine and his colleagues must rely.

Now it is difficult if not impossible for people charged with the responsibility of designing the practical policies of a great military power to take cognizance of such revolutionary currents in thought. They would be troubled by all sorts of unsettling doubts and might lose not only their commitment but also their efficiency. They could hardly take part in politics at all, save as Cassandras and Jeremiahs. They would come to resemble quite closely the "liberal-intellectuals" who, Mr. Levine feels, have deserted their posts and sought comfort in moralistic slogans.

So, it is not only a question of whether the intellectuals have let down their more "responsible" colleagues in Washington and in the paramilitary institution, but also a question of what sort of a period of history we are now going through. It seems likely that only men who are uninvolved in practical affairs are able and willing to ask this latter question. That they ask it in a primitive and unsophisticated vocabulary may be a condition of asking it at all.

There is another approach to the general problem. What really makes the reliable, sober-minded, cautiously idealistic, and admittedly well-intentioned "center," on which the security and progress of the entire social community normally seem to depend?

This is a complicated question, but one thing is certain: There can be no center without the high vision, at one end of the spectrum, of counsels of perfection. The center cannot do without Socrates and Tolstoy. It can practice neither caution nor "realism" without the Dream that its prudence qualifies. "Emotionalism" is a handy epithet for the technical expert whose labors depend upon the accuracy of nice calculations, but within the broad meaning of the term are those qualities of ardor, dedication, and uncompromising devotion without which no civilization can ever rise to greatness, much less survive. Too often, the people at the center exhibit a curious complacency which allows them to speak condescendingly of those whose "impractical" daring, whose unqualified love of human good, whose optimistic, even extravagant, estimate of the potentialities of man actually became, through cultural assimilation, the very moral tensions which we describe whenever we attempt to speak of "the dignity of man," and to which we proclaim a loyalty justifying incalculable risk.

Ordinarily, the center is a fairly satisfactory and safe place to be. You can do your

conscientious work and watch the structure of what you hope is becoming the Good Society grow before your eyes. Indeed, the center is the center because of this common-sense justification of its judgments and policies. But what if historical developments are such that *both* extremes from the center become intolerable threats to its well-being? What then will you do?

This is of course an extremely metaphysical analysis. It is like asking how you would cast a modern-dress, one-act adaptation of Dostoevsky's scene of the Grand Inquisitor's interview with the returned Jesus. Perhaps the right answer to any such request would be to say that the forces of good and evil, of right and wrong, are not sufficiently matured to be identified so simply in our time. The hour of *Götterdämmerung* is not yet here.

We have none the less some unpleasant alternatives before us. Either we need a new center or we do not. If we do not, we shall have to put away—far away—all those counsels of perfection which haunt the modern liberal, and harden our sensibilities toward the frightening prospect of a nuclear war. We shall have to be very attentive to the persuasions of the specialists in military affairs that *they don't intend to have one*. We shall have to continue to try or to pretend to think about what a great many intelligent people have concluded is now unthinkable.

But if the "emotionalism" of the liberals is a symptom, not of sentimental weakness, not of submission-to halfhearted, wishful thinking, but of so basic a questioning of the assumptions of modern civilization that they can find no disciplined vocabulary to give it acceptable rational form, then we *do* need a new center, and we shall get it only from those tortuous historical processes by means of which men revise the ideas on which their lives are based and through which they develop the socio-cultural institutions which can embody a new vision. It is not wholly unreasonable to suggest that the initial phenomena of those processes are what Mr. Levine finds disturbing.